

So there's a fisherman, and he's sitting on the dock, casting his line. He feels a tug on the line and begins to reel it in. He pulls up this massive, beautiful fish. Scales shimmering in the light, a true prize. But to the shock of an onlooking tourist, as the fisherman examines it, he seems almost disgruntled. He furrows his brow, takes the fish off the hook, and casts it back into the water.

Confused, the tourist stood and continued to watch this fisherman, with a similar scene repeating itself. He casts his line, feels a tug on it, and begins to reel it in, but this time, instead of a massive, glimmering fish, he pulls this tiny fish. A fraction of the previous catch. Yet, much to the tourist's dismay, the fisherman, with great joy, pulls and examines this tiny fish and takes it off the hook. Instead of throwing it in the water, he drops it in his bucket and begins to collect his things to go home.

Utterly confused, the tourist cuts him off on his way to the parking lot and says, "Excuse me, sir. I've been watching you for some time, and I can't for the life of me understand why you threw the first quite impressive fish back. That must have been at least two times the size of the fish you're taking home." The fisherman shrugged and said, "My pan is only big enough for a small fish."

Henry David Thoreau, a great 19th-century American writer, in a quest to figure out the meaning of life in the midst of the explosion of industrialization, escaped on retreat for two years to a cabin on Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts.

This Walden experience was Thoreau's attempt to make sense of life and figure out what the meaning of life is. There were all of these opportunities in the industrializing world, yet what was the meaning of life? In a far oversimplified distillation of what Thoreau wrote, this familiar quote, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation."

The tourist and Thoreau both understand and capture the very same principle, although it may not seem obvious at first. Both the tourist and Thoreau viewed life and understood that this was a reduction of vision. You're settling for something lesser, something that could be of a much greater opportunity.

C. S. Lewis was writing in the midst of World War II when England was facing immense turmoil and suffering. He preached a series of sermons that would be broadcast nationally as a way of bringing hope to a war-torn country. One set of those sermons is what we have entitled now, *The Weight Of Glory*. He wrote:

**If we consider the unblushing promise of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires**

**not too strong but too weak. We're half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. Lewis, *The Weight Of Glory***

We settle for pans too small, for quiet desperation, and for mud pies in the slum. The tourists, Thoreau, and Lewis all point to the problem. They get to the heart of the issue. At the core of our human life is desire. But so often in religious life, we over-freight this concept of self-denial, which is very part and parcel of the way of Jesus. You must learn to deny yourself if you are going to live life and life to the full that Jesus offers us. But we mistake it for thinking that means we must desire less.

As Lewis said, we are halfhearted creatures. We are far too easily pleased. The difference is self-denial opens our life up to a life to the fullest. Life with God is the broadest, biggest satiation of the desire of your heart. The problem isn't desire. The problem is you and I desire too little. We stop short of the deepest desire.

Put differently, there is within all of us a disease, a tension, an unquenchable fire that renders us incapable in this life of ever coming to full peace. The problem is how do we release that desire to how God has created and wired us? We are not easeful human beings who occasionally get restless. We are driven, forever obsessed with living lives, not out of quiet desperation, but trying to unleash that desire within us to find what our heart was most made for: life with God. In an age in which our restlessness is far too easily saturated and satiated, we have a tendency to misconstrue Godly life as one meaning to suppress our desires, but this is backward.

We're nearing the end of a long series through the Book of Exodus. What we find here in this scene is equal parts heartbreaking as well as just misunderstood. The people of Israel are at the base of Mount Sinai, and for seven chapters, we've watched Moses on top of Mount Sinai in the very presence of God, the manifest, concentrated presence of God, encountering this beautiful exchange in which God is beginning to lay the framework of life with his people. Here's the sanctuary where he will dwell. Here's the way they will spend their time. Here's how he is leading them back into this beautiful life. It's very much like a new husband and wife laying out the plans for a life together. They are on top of the mountain, but we see, at the bottom of the mountain, a whole different scene unfolding. Let's look at that scene in Exodus 32.

**When the people saw that Moses had been so long 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." Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 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, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." Exodus 32:1-4

Moses is up on the top of the mountain, the people are down below, and they're growing restless. Notice the beginning. "We don't know what happened to that Moses guy." They had left everything they'd ever known for 400 years, generations upon generations. And now they're at the base of the mountain with a lot of uncertainty festering within them.

When it says that they gathered around Aaron, it's not a wrong translation, but the word has much more of a connotation of they gathered against Aaron. It's a mob. It's a disgruntled group that is wondering what they are going to do. So Aaron is acting out of fear, not that this absolves him from responsibility. He began to gather the people and told them to bring all the gold, necklaces, and earrings, everything they had. They melt it down and make a god. They didn't know where Moses was. They didn't know where this God went. They decided to construct one of our own making.

**When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." 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. Exodus 32:5-6**

Now, the translation here is calf, but it could also be bull. Obviously, they're connected in the same context. But the reason bull is important is because that would link back to a very common Middle Eastern image of God. A bull was often viewed as a stand-in for the gods. It's symbolized fertility and strength. And so when they're fashioning this into a calf/bull, there's something going on in which they're hearkening back to what they know. Four hundred years in slavery in Egypt will do something to ingrain a way of life within you.

So the people, in a moment of uncertainty, hearken back on what they know, and they end up constructing what one commentator called a grotesque parody. They shape this calf, they shape this bull, and then in their mind, all that frenzy, they begin to worship. They say that these are our gods. "This must be the thing that took us out of Israel." So Aaron, trying to figure it out, he's like what if we just threw a worship service and call it to the Lord, and maybe that'll cover all the sins that are going on. So the text says that they got up early the next day and created some burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and here's where the text gets really polite.

It says they sat down to eat, drink, and indulge in revelry. The only time that word is ever used outside of this context in the scriptures has sexual connotations to it. They were engaging in sexual practice, which

was very common in pagan worship circles. The text is being a little bit polite, but you can understand what's happening. The worship's going on, they're eating, drinking, and they're giving themselves over to all of these sexual practices. It's gluttonous, where they've experienced everything their stomach could fill, and then they're going beyond and trying to satiate all their desires.

God and Moses created a covenant, inviting the people in, and a few chapters later, when the people say that they will do anything God asks, that is literally a marriage ceremony between two people. That's the image of the Covenant: the people of God being married to Yahweh. Commentator Christopher Wright wrote:

**The holiness of divine covenant making is parodied by the debauchery of human idol making; the miraculous grace of eating and drinking in the presence of the living God is replaced by play and promiscuity in the presence of a pagan parody. Wright**

The contrast could not be starker. It's a great exchange in which the opportunity to live and eat and drink in the very presence of Yahweh, the God who liberated them from Egypt, is rejected so they can indulge themselves in what they used to know, that life in slavery.

*"Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt" (v. 7). This is a startling shift. This is the first time God has not said, "My people who I brought up out of Egypt," He says, "Your people who you brought out of Egypt."*

**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, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' v. 8**

What's happening is God is looking at Moses and looking at the grotesque parody of idolatry at the bottom of the hill right after they had entered into covenants. God, in many ways, to stretch that metaphor, is looking for an annulment on the grounds of covenant breaking. This is somewhat akin to having adultery on your wedding night. This is like God and Israel got married, and as they're whisked away to a honeymoon, Israel commits adultery on that very night. It's devastating. You read it in God's voice. It doesn't take much to listen and hear the pain and anguish. We often think of God as distant and removed, and we remove his emotive part. But it's clear in the verses to come that God feels this.

**"I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 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." vv. 9-10**

The Covenant was always about this. It goes all the way back to Abraham, in which God in Genesis 12 told Abraham that through him, God would bless all the nations. A great number of people would come. Abraham will be blessed to be a blessing to all the nations. So that's the promise. So God plucks the Israelites out of Egypt, and he's beginning to

unfold this promise. Yet this is the moment he says, "These people are stiff-necked people."

This phrase comes from animals when you put a yoke on them and tug on them to turn and follow the lead, and the animal would refuse. They'd go in a different direction. God says, "I know these people. They're stiff-necked people." You can feel the anger rising up in him when he says, "Get out of my way, Moses. I want my anger to burn against them." This raises all sorts of interesting questions.

Why does God have to have Moses get out of the way for his anger to burn? I mean, God doesn't have to say anything to Moses. He could bypass Moses, who's standing there. Yet somehow, God says, "Leave me alone." It's a foreshadowing of Moses as an intercessor and a mediator. There's something about this in which God has, in his sovereignty, allowed Moses to be present there, and in some ways, God makes his actions vulnerable to the presence of a mediator.

God is furious. The word to destroy them is exactly what it sounds like. It's to finish, to consume, to totally demolish them. We have a hard time with this. We hear this, and we get frustrated, wondering how he could respond in such a way.

Is God not privy first to just whatever he would like to do? But also, is he not privy to the same emotional response that you or I would have, given the circumstances? He's angry. He's furious. God gets really upset in the presence of idolatry. He gets jealous the scriptures talk about. "These were my people." So he looks at Moses and says, "It's time for you to go get your people."

**But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. Exodus 32:11-14**

It is a fascinating scene, which first of all flashes back all the way to the beginning of the story with Moses, in which he's fearful to step in front of Pharaoh. Yet, his faith in the Lord and his history with God's action through him and his people has given him enough boldness to stand not just before Pharaoh but in front of Yahweh himself and call out to him. "Turn from your anger." That is an audacious claim. Then, he proceeds to make an argument in three steps with God.

Moses first reminds him of his own redeeming act and the relationship that ascended. "These are your people. Don't forget that. You are the one with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. You brought them up out of Egypt." And then he makes his second point. Moses urges him to

consider his name and his reputation. He says, "What will the Egyptians think? That you swooped in, took these people to just slaughter them up in the mountains? How will this make you look, God?" Thirdly, Moses urges God to remember the promise he made in the Covenant to his forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "You said this people would be more numerous than the stars. How could you wipe them out entirely and uphold the promise you made?"

Then, in one of the most startling, shocking verses in all of scripture, we see this in 32:14, "*Then the Lord relented.*" God listened to Moses and, even more so, didn't even offer a word back. In some profound way, Moses intercedes on behalf of the people. He becomes a mediator who reminds God of who God is. It says that the Lord relented and did not bring that against him. There's part of me that doesn't know what to do with that. I don't know what to do with that other than the fact that it seems as though God and all of his divine sovereignty will somehow, as I mentioned earlier, allow his divine will to be open to disruption by a mediator.

This whole scene of one interceding on behalf of the other becomes so pivotal to our understanding of all of the scriptures. When we talk about the rhythm and harmony of scripture, where you hear the people failing, breaking, and sinning and destroying that good, whole connection they had, yet someone steps in and advocates on their behalf, and God bestows forgiveness through that one mediator.

Do you hear the rhythm? Do you hear the harmony? This clearly points to Jesus, in which there was a mediator who was greater than Moses, a more perfect mediator than Moses himself. Moses is a mess up, just like us. He's obviously got moments where he's strong and has this faithfulness in the Lord, but he's not perfect by any stretch. Just follow his story. So there is one coming who is greater than Moses. But in this time, God somehow listens to the voice of this mediator who intercedes on the people's behalf, and the Lord relents.

If we're to locate ourselves in the story, we're not at the top of the mountain. We're not Moses; we're not God. We're down at the bottom. We're eating, drinking, and indulging in revelry. How did the Israelites get there? After all they've been through, this is one of the things I keep coming back to.

Certainly, if I were the Israelites, and all that God had done with all the power and the might that he had unleashed in Egypt, certainly I wouldn't be this prone to sin. That couldn't be the case. But we settle for small pans, mud pies, and quiet desperation. We, too, tend to settle for less. Christopher Wright, the Old Testament scholar I quote above, wrote:

**The Israelites, in their impatience, are about to exchange the promised presence of the living God 'camping' in their midst for the pretended presence of a no-god that threatened to bring about the absence\* of the very God to whom they owed their lives and freedom. They exchanged the God whose living voice they had heard from heaven for the lifeless statue of an animal incapable of speech of any kind, a thing forged from rings pulled from the very ears that had heard God's voice. Wright**

All sin, at some level, is an exchange. It's exchanging the presence of God for something lesser. It's exchanging the very experience of God for a parody, something that we think will bring us salvation. The Israelites cry that these are our gods who brought us out. They're searching to make sense of their story, and they're saying that maybe it was this thing. This is the thing that saved us.

They're getting to know God, but they're exchanging the very presence of God up on the top of the mountain for the calf at the bottom of the mountain. They're beginning to wonder where Moses is. They think that maybe these are the gods. Go back to Exodus 32:6. *"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."*

I alluded to this already, but Tim Mackey of the Bible Project makes the really important point that this mirrors the act of pagan worship that they experienced in Egypt. Now, that this absolves them of their responsibility. I want to make sure you don't think that. But what I do want to point out is this seems to paint sin in a different, more rich perspective than we tend to think of it. Sin is morally culpable acts that we commit in rebellion against God. Sin is that, but it seems like there's more going on here in which 400 years of slavery was ingrained in them as a way of life and a way of viewing the world.

They are now enslaved to that power. Individually culpable, but yet it has metastasized into something far greater as well. There are two things going on here. Most of us, when we read a text like this, think, "Well, I've never pulled my earrings off and tried to melt them down into the shape of a calf. I'm doing okay." We justify and rationalize.

I want to unpack this view of sin because most of us have a very flat view of sin. If we thicken that understanding of sin beyond just the actions we commit, which we'll get to that, but it's just the tip of the iceberg of our own insidious sin nature. It goes much, much deeper.

The reality is that any one of us here could probably avoid melting down the necklaces into the shape of a calf. But that action within the Israelites is coming from somewhere. It's stemming from somewhere. Most of us would look around, and whether we're looking externally at the world around us and recognizing its brokenness or internally, we come to the realization that something is wildly wrong. We can't manage our own thought life. We can't manage our anger. We can't manage our behaviors or impulses.

We're more prone to angry outbursts than we'd like. We're less generous than we thought we would be. We're addicted to pornography and substances and greed. I mean, it just, the rot runs through so deep, but the problem in the modern world is we've vacated this idea of objective wrong. If you look around the world and see all of this brokenness, but you don't have a concept called sin, you're left hopeless to deal with it. Because if I can't name the thing that is wrong, I have no hope of changing it. Then, I'm stuck with this feeling that the world is broken, and I'm contributing to it. I can't seem to figure out how to make it better; life is unmanageable.

Until the moment where you have a category like sin, you're hopeless. You cannot change because nothing's wrong. What's good for you is good for you. What's right for them is right for them. Tim Keller once said, "The only thing the modern world thinks we need salvation from is the concept of salvation." That becomes really problematic.

If I'm the arbiter of what's right and wrong, that's going to inevitably conflict with someone else. All of a sudden, you have seven billion people trying to figure out how to make sense of life. If we don't have a category called sin, there's no hope of being forgiven and healed from it. This is what's happening at the base of the mountain.

Let's take a look at this concept of sin. This is from a book that I adapted by Robert Mulholland called *Invitation to a Journey*. He talks about four layers of sin and four different concepts of sin. When we thicken our understanding of sin, it helps us toward the path of healing.

So, the first layer is what he calls "gross sins." This is old language. He does not mean icky sins. It means more overt. This first layer is gross sins. It's a deliberate sin. It's the sins of which you think—murder, anger, greed, lust, fornication, and impurity. Think of all the lists by Paul in the New Testament. This first layer is nearly universally understood as wrong. Most people everywhere would say murder's not great. It is universally understood. We stop mostly at thinking of sin in this layer.

Layer two is deliberate sins. This is the layer of sin that's buried a bit deeper into our souls. These tend to be the socially acceptable behaviors that are incongruent with the way of Jesus. So you come to faith, you begin to walk with Jesus, and you realize, "Oh, some of the things I used to do are actually not what Jesus would have us do."

Some of these can be materialism, gossip, or a different sexual ethic. These are the deliberate things that often we know, as a follower of Jesus that we shouldn't do. But we think, "Well, everybody else is doing it. So it's probably fine." It's Paul in Corinthians when he says that everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. There are times in this category where, depending on how you want to define the word sin, it's just actions that hinder us from the presence of God. It's that great exchange that we talked about. These top two layers are labeled as behavioral. These tend to manifest in the things you see in other people. It can happen behind closed doors, of course, but it's the behavioral aspects of sin.

There's a deeper, more insidious layer, layers three and four, that happens more in what I would call the shadow side. These are quite easy to hide. We, as Christians in particular, are very good at hiding them. We get good at saying the right things and presenting an image that seems to have everything together, but there's this much deeper, more insidious thing beneath the surface.

One of the problems as Christians is we come to church and act as though we're fine. Everything's just fine all the time. We tend to suppress the deeper issues. We get good at masking layers one and two. Then, we project an image that everything's okay. But the problem is there's a deeper, more insidious part of our souls that needs healing.

So, layer three is the unconscious sins. These are the blind spots. They're usually internal. But they can be external. You realize patterns of thinking, such as, I continually am cynical towards this person, or I degrade them. They are the sins that Paul talks about in Romans 7 when he says, "The things I don't want to do, I do. But the things I do want to do, I don't do." He is wrestling with this, and he wants to know where this comes from. It is beneath the surface, often unconscious. Then, when we look back, we realize the sin. This begins to be the area that the recovery community understands quite well.

They give voice to these unconscious sins, these trust structures that we'll get to, because they recognize the alcoholism or whatever addiction it is, the behavior that manifests is just the tip of the iceberg. It's the manifestation of a deeper need, of a deeper ache that they have yet to touch and allow people into and allow God to form.

That gets ultimately to the deepest layer, four, the trust structures. This final layer is where the deepest inner orientations of our hearts reside. It's from this place where all behavior patterns flow. It's what the Proverbs would say, "Guard your heart above all, for from it flows the springs of life." It's the Psalmist saying that there's something deeper within us.

It's when you cut that person off in the freeway and flip them off. You wonder where that came from? It came somewhere in layers three and four, a much deeper part of who you are. Layer four is what one author calls our emotional programs for coping. We develop patterns and behaviors as a way of masking fear and pain. It's what you see at the base of the mountain. It's the Israelites who are like, "We don't know where this Moses went, and we're getting a little nervous."

They have to make sense of that story somehow. So they go into what's been ingrained deep within them, which is their identity in Egypt as slaves. They resort to what they know to help quell the anxiety. That's a very overt example that we see in the scriptures, but you and I do this all the time.

We have trust structures built on things other than God. We have things that are buried within us that we have to cope with. It's the addictions; it's the patterns, the habits, the ways of thinking, the lashing out in anger, the drinking one more drink, the taking one more hit, the visiting the website one more time, whatever it is, they're mechanisms for us to cope with the pain and ache that's deep in us. It's the small pan. It's the quiet desperation. It's the mud pie in the slum.

All of it points to a deeper longing for God. We've built a life where we're not sure how we open up those deepest parts of us. How do we open up our trust structures to a way in which we can allow God into those deep parts of who we are? The bottom line is sin masquerades as life, but it enslaves us to death.

The Israelites at the base of the mountain thought they were finding life. "These are our gods." These are the ones who brought us the salvation we just experienced. It masquerades as life, but it always over promises and under delivers. It ultimately ends up enslaving us to death.

Don't forget the patterns they fell back to were the ones they learned in slavery that was ingrained within them. They had nowhere else to go.

They reverted to all that they did know and ultimately didn't realize that engaging in that was slowly eroding their souls. God looks at that, and he's heartbroken and angry. He said that we were going to be different people. It's what Paul says in Romans, "For the wages of sin is death." What he means by that is exactly the metaphor he uses. What sin earns you is death.

So God is constantly trying to liberate us from these deeper things because he wants to offer life to us. But we are caught up playing in the mud when the offer of life at sea is available to us. We saturate and satiate our desires, but we are far too easily pleased. The Israelites think it will bring life. You and I think it will bring life. We think another hit, another promotion, another whatever will satisfy the deepest ache in our soul, but as a fellow sojourner, I have found that it doesn't bring the life it promises.

Yet I am just as confounded that I often revert back to those trust structures and think, God, why am I here at the base of the mountain constructing some idol, thinking that will bring life? It fails us over and over. What I find at the base of the mountain is what many of us have found: we're looking up to the top and saying, "God, if there was only someone who could heal that."

The reality of the pain is what you read in the voice of God. It creates a very real fracture. When we sin, we put something out into the world that is broken. It's akin to throwing a rock in the middle of a still pond, and the ripples go out and out. But multiply that by seven billion people, and you get chaos. You get war. You get greed. You get corruption. You get all this brokenness. We contribute to the brokenness of the world, and yet we also endure that brokenness. It's this mess in which we look at God and say, "God, what have we done?"

God has every right to look at us and say, it'd be better off if I just destroyed you. But, God doesn't. Paul, in Romans, would say that if you confess your sins and believe that he is Lord, you'll be given life and be forgiven of that. 1 John attests to the same thing.

**If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10**

The hope of all these layers of sin is until we can name our contributions to the brokenness of the world, we have no hope of finding healing. Because if it's just up to me to figure out what's right and wrong, well then eat, drink, and be merry. But what if there is a brokenness? What if the pain you feel, what if the ache you experience, what if the pan is that small, but you keep choosing it? What if there is more, but it takes the act of confession? It takes us naming that which is wrong before God and before one another.

We need to acknowledge that we have contributed to the brokenness of the world and feel utterly left alone. We need to let God know that we

need a mediator like Moses. We need someone to forgive us outside of ourselves because every time we try to make sense of it and make the world right, we fail.

We'll see the Israelites fail over and over and over. The thing about Moses is as good as Moses was and as much as he mediated on behalf of the people, and God listened to him. He was just the type in a shadow. He is pointing to something much greater. This is what we have been looking at in the past few chapters. The Tabernacle was just the shadow of Jesus. The Sabbath was a shadow of Jesus. The same is true here. Moses was just the shadow of Jesus.

It's the rhythm and harmony within the scriptures that point to and say that there is someone who will substitute himself, who will step in and offer his life on behalf of others. This is in Exodus 32:30; you see, Moses actually makes this quite explicit. Moses goes down and sees everything that's happening. He confronts the people. Then, we get to this in verse 30.

**The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." So Moses went back to the Lord and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."**

**Exodus 32:30-32**

Moses offers his own life on behalf of the people. Every sin, every fracture needs substitution. We don't like this concept in the modern world, but the reality is true. If you lie to someone, brokenness happens. If that's going to be absolved, somebody has to absorb the pain that's there. Either you humble yourself and ask for forgiveness. Then, what happens in that exchange is the person who was wronged absorbs the pain and does not retaliate in kind. They take the pain that caused brokenness and hurt within that individual. And they allow it to die within themselves. It will ultimately lead to death until you offer it to someone in search of forgiveness.

This is what Jesus did on the cross. Every sin and brokenness creates a need for someone to absorb the wrong that took place. Jesus is there on the night of his death, and he lays his arms out on the cross, and he says, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*" He took on all of it. The perfect sacrifice, the perfect mediator, the one who didn't deserve any of it. Yet he laid his life on the cross and substituted himself.

He's the greater Moses. He's the one who says to God, "I lay down my life for the sake of others and make atonement." He takes our pain, our brokenness, and he absorbs it. It costs him his life. What we need is exactly what the people of Israel need. We need a mediator. We need someone who is the perfect lamb of God. Someone who can enter into the Tabernacle, who is the fullest realization of the Sabbath.

Our work does not bring us life. It's through our resting in what Christ has done. We need someone, and Jesus marches up the mountain of Calvary, just like Moses did, and lays his life down for you and me.

Are you willing to confess the brokenness you have? Or are you more satisfied with the small pan, the quiet desperation, the mud pies in the slum? There is life on offer for you. A life that God desperately is inviting you into. "*I've come to bring life and life to the fullest.*" Jesus said it's here; would you accept it?

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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