

The Life of Moses

• Lesson Eight •

Moses' Spiritual Leadership in Action

1. Idols lured God's people away from him
2. Moses prayed that God would forgive Israel
3. God answered Moses' prayer and forgave his people

Worship

Every night we come to the same conclusion: we've sinned. At the same time, we close our eyes in peace and confidence. Our blessed Savior has forgiven our sin. He remembers it no more! And we don't have to remember it either. It's the best news of each day! Jesus forgives all our sins, from the smallest to the greatest. And the grace of forgiveness motivates us to "sin no more."

We find that grace in our reading today.

Read John 8:1-11

¹ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, daily we sin much and merit your punishment—temporal and eternal. In your mercy and grace, you don't treat us as our sins deserve but rather freely and fully forgive us. Lead us to continue to confess our sins. What is more, move us to bask in the glory of the forgiveness of sins that is found in the blood of your Son. Help us act, speak, and live as your forgiven children. Amen.

Introduction

Making excuses for sin is as old as the Garden of Eden. Why do people do it? Can sin ever be rationalized?

Sin daily knocks at the Christian's door. Daily we let it in. God doesn't want us to excuse our sins. He desires repentance. A repentant heart seeks the Savior for forgiveness. In our lesson today, we have all these elements: committing sin, rationalizing sin, and seeking forgiveness for sin.

Studying God's Word

Freed from slavery in Egypt by the mighty hand of the Lord, the Israelites now looked forward to entering the Promised Land. But before God would bring them to Canaan, he wanted to bring them into his presence at Mount Sinai. There he would give them his laws and teach them how to live as his holy people.

The Israelites heard God speak the Ten Commandments to Moses. Moses remained on Mount Sinai 40 days and nights to receive more laws from the Lord, especially instructions on how to build the tabernacle where God would dwell among his people.

When Moses was on the mountain, Israel sinned. From this event we learn about Moses' great spiritual faith and wisdom and his great love for Israel.

Idols lured God's people away from him

Read Exodus 32:1-6

1. Why did Israel build a golden calf? (verse 1)

2. How did Aaron try to gloss over the sin? (verse 5)

3. What makes this sin so incredible?

Israel's worship of the golden calf boggles many believers' minds. But are modern-day Christians capable of falling into such sins? Discuss.

3. What was the result of Moses' intercession? (verse 14)

His Word in My Life

When a person falls into sin and reaps the harvest of that sin, we are often tempted to gloat and say that this person got what he or she deserved. How do we combat this temptation?

The Lord wants us to pray for others, even when it seems as if they are getting what they deserve. How does our sinful nature try to keep us from interceding for others when they are going through difficult times?

Which statement is better, and why? Because we pray, God is faithful. Or, because God is faithful, we pray.

Which statement is better, and why? Because we pray, God answers us. Or, because God answers us, we pray.

Moses asked God for mercy. His prayer was not based on Israel's goodness but on God's mercy and honor. We too offer intercessions for others based on God's mercy, through the great Defense Attorney—Jesus Christ.

God answered Moses' prayer and forgave his people

Moses descended Mount Sinai and saw the rebellion of Israel. The Israelites' Eternal Leader did not forsake them, and neither did Moses.

Read Exodus 32:15-34

1. What excuses did Aaron offer for his sin? (verses 21-24)

2. What courses of action did Moses take? (verses 19, 20, and 25-30)

Read Exodus 33:1-3,12-34:10

3. Even after God had forgiven Israel, Moses continued to press God for more gracious blessings. What final blessings did God say he would give Israel? (33:12-14; 34:10)

4. What great blessing did the Lord give Moses? In what sense might we call this the highpoint of Moses' life? Why was God's glory the touchstone and guiding light of Moses' entire ministry? of our ministry?

His Word in My Life

Agree or disagree: God at times may punish us for our sins. Discuss.

What would your life be like if God did indeed punish you for your sin? Or another way of saying it, what would life be like without the atoning sacrifice of Christ?

Give some examples of how sin carries with it some unpleasant consequences. What is God's purpose in allowing unpleasant consequences?

Why does the forgiveness we have received from Christ affect the way we treat others?

When Israel sinned, Moses went to the Lord for mercy. God's mercy included some necessary chastening, and it did not preclude long-term punishment if Israel continued in their sins. However, God always remains faithful to his promises of sending a Savior and giving forgiveness to those who trust in his grace. This is his glory; we see this glory in the face of Christ, and we reflect this glory in our lives.

Summary

God's people sinned against their Lord. Moses was called to perform the greatest act of leadership ever. He had to face the Lord God and get him to change his mind about destroying Israel. Moses performed his act of leadership. He interceded with God on behalf of Israel, using God's own promised grace and mercy as his tools.

Although we are not called upon to pray for a particular nation, we too can follow Moses' example by praying that God would continue to have mercy on his church and forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ.