
every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a **prostitute**.

Jeremiah 5:3 LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You struck them, but they felt no pain; you crushed them, but **they refused correction**. They made **their faces harder than stone** and **refused to repent**.⁴ I thought, “These are only the poor; they are foolish, for **they do not know the way of the LORD**, the requirements of their God.”⁶ Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them, a wolf from the desert will ravage them, a leopard will lie in wait near their towns to tear to pieces any who venture out, for their rebellion is great and their backslidings many.

Psalms 81:11 “But my people **would not listen to me**; Israel would not submit to me.”¹² **So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices**.¹³ “If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways,¹⁴ how quickly I would subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes!”

The Lord’s long-suffering mercy and love

Jeremiah 31:18 “I have surely heard Ephraim’s moaning: ‘You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God.’”

Jeremiah 31:19 “After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.”

Jeremiah 31:20 “Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore, my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him,” declares the LORD.

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Becoming Like What We Worship

The Loss of Meaning and the Problem of Idolatry: part 4

March 19, 2023

The Golden Calf

The golden calf—an expose of human nature

Deut. 28:64-65 “Among those nations **you shall find no rest**, and there will be **no resting place** for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you **a trembling heart**, **failing of eyes**, and **languishing of soul**.”

The golden calf (Exodus 32)

Exodus 32:1 “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.”

What do we learn about human nature from the setting?

- Impatient.
- Insecure.
- Fickle
- Ungrateful. “What have you done for me lately?”
- Immediate needs, now!
- “We have a better idea.”

Misplaced hope and trust

Exodus 32:2 “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.”

Exodus 32:4 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, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

■ We settle for foolish hope over raw “uncertainty.”

Exodus 32:4 Then they said, “These are your gods, 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.

“Stiff-necked”

■ Deuteronomy 9:6 Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for **you are a stiff-necked people.**

They became identified with the idol they worshiped.

■ Deut. 9:12 ... “Go down from here at once, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have turned away quickly from what I commanded them and have made an idol for themselves.”

Deut. 9:24 You have been **rebellious** against the LORD ever since I have known you.

Hosea 4:16 Since Israel is **stubborn** like **a stubborn heifer,** can the Lord now pasture them like a lamb in a large field?”

The Radiant Face of Moses

■ Exodus 34:29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that **his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.** ³⁰ When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.

Idolatry in Jeremiah, and its effects

■ Jeremiah 2:5 ... This is what the LORD says: “What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed **worthless idols** and **became worthless themselves.**

■ ⁶ They did not ask, ‘Where is the LORD, who brought us up out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness, through a land of deserts and ravines, a land of drought and utter darkness, a land where no one travels and no one lives?’

Jeremiah 2:11 Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have **exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols.** ¹² Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror,” declares the LORD.

■ Jeremiah 2:13 “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Jeremiah 2:20 “Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, ‘I will not serve you!’ Indeed, on
