

Avoiding Spiritual Compromise, Pt 2

Exodus 32

To avoid spiritual compromise, God's people need strong leaders who do not compromise the truth, who pray selflessly, and who exercise necessary spiritual discipline.

Last week, we considered the need for strong leaders who do not compromise the truth. Today, we will discuss the last two ways to avoid spiritual compromise: God's people need strong leaders who pray selflessly, and who exercise necessary spiritual discipline.

1. To avoid spiritual compromise, God's people need strong leaders who will pray selflessly for God's glory through His people.

In Exodus 32:10, God told Moses that He would destroy Israel and make Moses into a great nation. If Moses would have agreed to this, he would have sinned. Instead, this command drove Moses to prayer. V. 14 says that God repented and changed His mind about destroying the Israelites.

Suffice it to say here that God's "repentance" looks at things from our point of view. It *seems* to us as if God changed His mind in response to our prayers, when His purpose has been ordained from eternity. He never changes. But in ways we cannot understand, He uses our prayers to accomplish His sovereign will. To be strong leaders who get God's compromised people back on track, we should pray as Moses did here.

A. Strong leaders pray that God's person will be exalted.

In verses 7 and 10, God threatened to destroy Israel and to make Moses into a mightier and greater nation. Deut. 9:14 Why did He do this? *It was a test to prove Moses' character as the leader of the nation and the mediator of the covenant of the Law. If Moses had agreed to God's "Plan B," it would have revealed Moses' desire for personal glory.*

Moses passed the test with flying colors! God referred to Israel as *your* people whom *you* brought up from Egypt. But when Moses prayed in v. 11, he turned it around: Israel was *Your* people, God. Why would you destroy your people? He goes on to base his prayer on God's reputation with the Egyptians. He says, in effect, "If You destroy Your people, You'll look bad to the Egyptians!"

In other words, *Moses prayed that God's person would be exalted through His people.* God's glory should drive our prayers, especially when we're concerned about His people who have fallen into sin or compromise with the world.

B. Strong leaders pray that God's promises will be enacted.

Moses (v. 13) reminds God of His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob). We need to be careful to interpret God's promises in their context and in light of the full revelation of Scripture. And we need to remember that just because God promised to do something does not mean that He will do it the instant we ask. Moses did not live to see the fulfillment of God's promise to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan. But, pray God's promises back to Him: "Lord, you promised that You will build Your church. I ask you to build Your church in this difficult situation!"

C. Strong leaders pray that God's people will be established

Moses' prayer, in verses 11-13, was after God told him what the people had done, but before he went down and saw it for himself. After he saw how bad things really were, he went back up the mountain to see if he could make atonement for their sin. Ex. 32:30-32

Verses 31-32 records the amazing prayer of Moses. It is similar to Paul's prayer in Romans 9:3 when he said that he was willing to be accursed if it would have resulted in the salvation of Israel! Both Moses and Paul wanted this badly.

Our heartfelt prayers should be for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done in His church for His glory.

2. To avoid spiritual compromise, God's people need strong leaders who will exercise necessary spiritual discipline.

Moses cared so deeply for these sinning people that he was willing to be blotted out of God's book if that's what it took for them to be restored.

And yet at the same time, he was the righteously angry avenger of the sinners. He smashed the stone tablets, signifying that Israel had broken God's covenant. Then he burned the calf, ground it to powder and made the Israelites drink it. This showed that the manmade calf had not led Israel out of Egypt. And it showed the people that they must suffer the consequences of their sin.

Then he issued a challenge. Ex. 32:26 There are only two sides: the Lord's side and the devil's side. Spiritual compromise puts us against the Lord. When we've fallen into compromise, the way back is to turn from our sin and stand on the Lord's side,

Moses then charged the Levites who joined him to go through the camp and kill everyone, including close friends and relatives, *who wouldn't repent of worshiping the golden calf*. Ex. 32:27

Why didn't Moses execute Aaron? We know that the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but Moses prayed for Aaron and God graciously spared him. Deut. 9:20 Perhaps the Lord knew that Moses needed Aaron's continued help. Perhaps Aaron repented. He later became the high priest who made annual atonement for Israel's sins.

Thankfully, we are never required to take such drastic measures to discipline sinning Christians! *But we are required to confront believers who fall into sin and if they refuse to repent after we've gone through the biblical process, to remove them from the church.* Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5 If we fail to exercise necessary discipline, the leaven of sin and compromise will spread through the church and God's name will be dishonored.

Conclusion

Moses' death on behalf of Israel could not have atoned for their sins, because Moses had sins of his own. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, who never sinned, but on the cross, bore God's wrath against sinners. "He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5:21

That is God's gracious, free gift to you if you will trust in Jesus Christ.