

## Avoiding Spiritual Compromise

### Exodus 32:1-35

Prior to Exodus 32, Aaron had some spiritual experiences that far exceed anything that any of us have ever had. After all these displays of God's glory and power, while Moses was on the mountain meeting with God, Aaron quickly yielded to the people's request and fashioned the golden calf for Israel to worship.

1 Corinthians 10:11-12 – If we were in Aaron's shoes, we would probably do the same thing.

The sin of making and worshiping the golden calf was not total apostasy. Israel was not, in their minds, totally rejecting God to follow pagan idols. Rather, what they were practicing syncretism. Syncretism is a blending and worshiping of two or more gods. They were tweaking the worship of the true God so that it fit more in line with their liking.

*Their sin was not total apostasy, but rather spiritual compromise. 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.*

**To avoid spiritual compromise, God's people need strong leaders who will not compromise the truth.**

Aaron's weak leadership allowed Israel to fall into this horrible compromise. To correct Aaron's compromise and get Israel back on track, Moses had to take bold action. Exodus 32 reveals at least seven ways that spiritual compromise can seep into a congregation of God's people if the leaders are weak:

**Spiritual compromise happens when you view salvation as a human endeavor rather than as an act of God.**

The people began their request by attributing their deliverance from Egypt to Moses. Ex. 32:1 Even though God provided for them from the time they left Egypt until now, they would not acknowledge God as the deliverer and provider. This allowed them to give the golden calf credit for their salvation. Ex. 32:4; Psalm 108:19-22

The Bible proclaims that salvation is not the work of a great leader, like Moses or Paul, much less a man-made idol! Spiritual leaders are just instruments through whom God works. 1 Cor. 3:5 Salvation requires God's mighty power to impart life to those who were dead in their sins. Eph. 2:4-5; Jonah 2:9

**Spiritual compromise can happen even with leaders who should know better.**

Aaron should have known better, but even Peter and Barnabas gave into the Judaizers and got carried away in their hypocrisy. Gal. 2:11-21 If men of the spiritual stature of Peter and Barnabas could compromise the gospel under pressure, then we all need to be on guard! Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 4:16

**Spiritual compromise happens when you become impatient waiting on God.**

Moses spent forty days on the mountain and the people got tired of waiting. Ex. 32:1 Even though God was providing for them, they wanted Him to move faster. So, they asked Aaron to make a god to go before them.

When you get in a hurry and demand a quick fix to issues that may take time, you expose yourself to spiritual error. Waiting on God is hard. False teachers are ready and willing to tell you the opposite. The biblical way of growth is slower. 1 Tim. 4:7; Psalm 27:14

**Spiritual compromise happens when leaders want to please the people rather than please God.**

Apparently, Aaron was a “nice” man who didn’t like confrontation. So, when the people asked him to make a god who would go before them, he went along with their demand. When he heard them proclaim this idol to be their god who brought them up from Egypt, rather than confronting them, he built an altar and proclaimed a feast unto the Lord. Ex. 32:5 Maybe he was hoping for a compromise that wouldn’t upset the people. In this way, they could have it both ways.

Rather than helping the people turn back to the Lord, however, this compromise quickly degenerated into a drunken orgy, including sexual immorality (the Hebrew words imply this). The King James Version translates “out of control” (v. 25) as “the people were naked.” That’s how quickly things can go awry when spiritual leaders are people-pleasers rather than God-pleasers.

**Spiritual compromise happens when you want a safer, user-friendly “god” who will work for you.**

The God whom Israel had encountered on the mountain was scary! You can’t negotiate with or manipulate a God like that. You can’t work out better terms for the covenant, where things are a little more equal. All you can do is submit to such awesome power!

R. C. Spoul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology*:

*The cow gave no law and demanded no obedience. It had no wrath or justice or holiness to be feared. It was deaf, dumb, and impotent. But at least it could not intrude on their fun and call them to judgment.*

A golden calf is a safer, more user-friendly god! You can use a god like that to get what you want. If he doesn’t come through, then set him aside and make another god. Sooner or later, you’ll find one you like! But when you aren’t happy with God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture and you remake Him to be more user-friendly, you’re compromising the true faith in Christ Jesus.

**Spiritual compromise happens when you excuse your sin and don’t accept responsibility for it.**

Aaron took the gold earrings from the people and fashioned it with a graving tool to make a molten calf. Ex. 32:4 When Moses angrily confronted him, Aaron lamely replied he just threw the gold into the fire and a miracle took place: Out came this carefully crafted calf! Ex. 32:24

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, sinners have tried to put the blame for their sin on others. Adam blamed Eve and even God for giving him Eve. She blamed the serpent. On and on it goes!

**Spiritual compromise happens when you refuse to submit to God’s ways.**

God told Moses that the Israelites were “a stiff-necked people.” Ex. 32:9

Stiff-necked people refuse to submit to the Lord and His ways with them. They think that their ways are right and everyone else, including God, is wrong. Israel’s “stiff necks” are seen in their repeated grumbling against the Lord, despite His repeated, gracious dealings with them.

You’re especially vulnerable to spiritual compromise when the Lord’s way with you involves difficult trials. As we’ve seen, waiting on the Lord is hard. We want to go straight to the Promised Land, not wander around in the hot, barren wilderness. To avoid spiritual compromise, you must submit to God’s ways (1 Pet. 5:6-11).

So, Aaron’s weak leadership and his aversion to confrontation and conflict allowed Israel to jump into idolatry.