

# The Golden Calf and the Sin of Impatience (Exodus 32:1-14)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Exodus

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## I. Review and Background

- a. Moses has been on Mount Sinai for 40 days, along with his assistant Joshua. Before he ascended the mountain, he left his brother Aaron and Hur in charge, and Moses said *he would be back*.
  - i. Read **Exodus 24:9-18**.
- b. While Moses was on the mountain, the Lord gave him detailed instructions regarding the construction of the tabernacle.
- c. At the end of Moses' time on the mountain, the Lord gives him two stone tablets, with the 10 Commandments engraved on them, "written with the finger of God".

## II. The People Rebel Against the Lord

- a. Read **Exodus 32:1-14**.
- b. Storyline:
  - i. The people see that Moses is delayed in coming back down from the mountain, and they ask Aaron to make gods go before them.
  - ii. Aaron complies with their request. He asks for golden earrings from the women and has a molten calf made from them.
  - iii. Aaron then builds an altar for this "god" and proclaims a feast. The next day the people rise early to offer sacrifices to their new god, then "sat down to eat and drink and rose to play". (This phrase is later quoted by Paul in **1 Corinthians 10:7**).
  - iv. Based on this unfortunate turn by Aaron and the Israelites, the Lord directs Moses to go down from the mountain *immediately*.
  - v. The Lord tells Moses that He is burning with anger against the people. He then tells Moses that He plans to consume (destroy) the rebellious nation of Israel and make a new nation from Moses.
  - vi. Moses *appeals to the Lord* to spare the people from their impending destruction. Moses makes his case before the Lord as follows:

1. Moses says that *the Egyptians will find out* and speak badly of God for taking His people out into the Wilderness to kill them.
  2. Moses encourages God to *be merciful* toward the people despite their wickedness. (However, note that Moses *does not* minimize the seriousness of their sin.)
  3. Moses *reminds the Lord of the promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*: that He would multiply their descendants and give them the land of Canaan as an inheritance.
- vii. The Lord heeds the request of Moses and agrees to show mercy to the rebellious people. He foregoes destroying them all at that time.
- c. This story from **Exodus 32** is used by Paul in **1 Corinthians 10** as a lesson to illustrate the danger of Christians falling into the sin of *idolatry* (worshiping the image of a created thing).
- i. This sin clearly was still a problem in the early church.
  - ii. While the sin of idolatry (creating man-made gods) is still a problem in certain parts of the world (I think of the example of Hindus in India), we may not think of this as a common sin in our own western culture (dominant cultural framework in the US/Canada/ Western Europe).
  - iii. On the other hand, Paul does equate *covetousness or greed* to the sin of idolatry (worshiping created things rather than the Creator).
    1. “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and *covetousness, which is idolatry*. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience....” (**Colossians 3:5-6**, NKJV)
    2. “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and *greed, which amounts to idolatry*. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience....” (**Colossians 3:5-6**, NASB95)
- d. This story is so familiar to many of us that we can easily overlook important lessons for us that it contains.
- i. This account of the golden calf incident was written down *to teach us something important*. Let us make the effort to dig deeper to discover what the lessons for us might be.

1. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (**Romans 15:4**, NKJV)
- ii. Throughout the Scriptures, there are stories where most people did evil or went along with it, while a few (sometimes only one person) had the courage and conviction to stand against it.
  1. Recently I read an online article by Jordan Peterson (8/31/2020), ‘*Hell, One Step at a Time*’, in which he discussed a book written by American historian Christopher Browning, ‘*Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*’ (HarperCollins publishers, 1992). The book reviewed is a rather disturbing account of the transformation of normal ‘decent’ middle-aged German family men into trained killers who committed horrible atrocities against Jewish men, women and children civilians in Poland during World War II.
    - a. The men who committed these crimes were not Nazi Party members, nor were most of them anti-Semitic.
    - b. Perhaps the most disturbing thing about the book, according to Peterson, was how psychologically plausible the corruption of these ‘normal’ men was. It happened step-by-step, in increments as the men caved into expectations and pressure to conform, starting by ignoring their consciences on small matters first, ultimately leading to the cold-blooded execution of women and children.
    - c. Peterson warned his readers at the outset of his article: “Such a book is best read with caution—and, more importantly (with that caution firmly in mind), *read as a potential perpetrator, rather than as a hypothetical victim or, worse, hero.*”
    - d. That warning stuck with me. It is easy to read a story of people going along with the crowd to do something evil and look down on those involved, thinking, “Well, I certainly would never do that!”
      - i. Really? Are you *sure* that under the same type of circumstances, you would have the courage to go against the crowd and follow your conscience from the start, and face the consequences?

2. Perhaps we should first pause and consider how *we might be tempted* to do the very same things that other “normal people” did when under pressure to conform to the crowd when faced with a similar test.
3. The danger when we read Bible stories where most of the people followed the crowd into evil is to *confidently associate ourselves with the heroes*. We can automatically assume we would have done what they did (refusing to compromise, refusing to give in to their convictions) when facing external pressure or peer pressure from the crowd. However, let us remember that *we know the outcome of their trials*, while those who lived through these trials, in their time of testing, *did not know the ultimate outcome!* Examples include:
  - a. Noah versus the people of his age, prior to the Flood (**Genesis 6-7**);
  - b. Lot versus the men of Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 19**);
  - c. Rahab versus the others in Jericho (**Joshua 2&6**)
  - d. Daniel and his three friends (threatened with the fiery furnace and the lion’s den) versus the kingdoms of Babylon and Persia (**Daniel 3 & 6**);
  - e. The prophets, who generally were isolated and in a persecuted minority versus most of the kings and people (throughout the Old Testament);
  - f. The scene where the crowd chooses to free Barabbas instead of Jesus (**Matthew 27**); and
  - g. The case we are currently reviewing: the Israelites and Aaron who made the golden calf, versus Moses and Joshua (**Exodus 32**).
4. Try to *imagine yourself in their situation*. See if you can discern what they were thinking: what led them to compromise, to do what they *knew* was wrong. With that perspective, perhaps we will not be so quick to look down on them. Instead, perhaps we can learn from their mistakes (ones *we* might be tempted to make if faced with a similar challenge).
5. I recall a similar humble perspective in the example I saw in *Willie Flores*, a minister/evangelist I served under in the ministry in Boston many years ago. Willie had been a drug

addict in New York City and came from a very rough background. When sitting down with people to discuss sin before they were baptized:

- a. This minister had a very humble attitude, coming out of knowing himself and what he was capable of.
  - b. He told me, “Every sin has its own short-term pleasure or attraction associated with it, and there is *no sin that I could not develop an appetite for.*”
  - c. Willie *did not look down on anyone* involved in *any sin*. He knew in his heart that he was capable, under the right circumstances (if he let himself stray from God) of doing the very same thing!
- e. **Questions:** What were *the people* thinking? What was *Aaron* thinking?
- i. How and why would they decide to do something so foolish as to make a golden calf and call it their “god” after the Lord spoke to them so clearly only a few weeks earlier?
  - ii. Review the background of what God had told them.
    1. Read **Exodus 20:1-6**, at the start of the Lord speaking the 10 Commandments.
    2. Read **Deuteronomy 5:22-29**, which recounts the reaction of the people after hearing the Lord’s voice pronouncing the 10 Commandments.
      - a. The people heard extremely clear instructions from the Lord regarding no other “gods” and not making any images of God.
      - b. They reacted by fearing God and told Moses, “whatever He says, we will do”.
      - c. They feared God initially, but *lost their fear of God* in a matter of weeks.
  - iii. Now let us consider *what* were the people thinking that led them to ask for Aaron to make “gods” to go before them.
    1. “When the people saw that Moses was delayed coming down from the mountain...” (the people said to Aaron) “...As for Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him”. (**Exodus 32:1**)

- a. The time delay and uncertainty of Moses' return clearly were bothering the people.
2. Perhaps for the first few days after Moses departed, everything was ok; then, eventually, people started wondering what happened to Moses, would he ever return, etc. Finally, after several weeks of no-show, the Israelites gave up hope and thought *he might never return*.
  - a. Maybe Moses had died while on the mountain, or God killed him, or he decided to stay up there with the Lord and never return.
3. The people were afraid to be without a god to lead them, so they went to a 'Plan B', drawing from their life in Egypt (a land of rampant idolatry and other 'gods'). They took things into their own hands and had an idol, another 'god', created by Aaron.
  - a. **Question:** Why a golden *calf* (as opposed to some other animal)?
  - b. When studying about the Bible and Persia, I ran across a story recorded by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, about the Egyptian practice of selecting one special bull (with particular markings), which was then pampered and treated as a god, Apis.
    - i. After the bull died, they would embalm it and put its body in a huge sarcophagus, then embark on a search for the next Apis (a new bull with the same markings).
    - ii. The Egyptians did not venerate all bulls, *just this one special, selected bull*. (Unlike Hindus, they had no problem with eating the others.
    - iii. One Persian king (Cambyses) in Memphis, Egypt, at the time a new Apis bull was being celebrated, got annoyed and stabbed the bull, saying in effect "What kind of god is this, a creature of flesh and blood, that can feel weapons of iron?"
    - iv. The Apis bull was considered an incarnation of or accessory to *Ptah*, the creator-god worshiped in Memphis, Egypt.

1. (Source: Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*; published by Baker Books, 1990; pp. 115-122)
- c. I wondered if this long-running practice of Egyptians to worship a bull as the 'god' Apis might be associated with the golden calf story. Actually, *it is mentioned* in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, an early compilation of rules and recommendations for the church (source material related to this considered to be from the 300's AD). In one place where it discusses the importance of Christians reading the Old Testament (but not having to follow all the rules contained in it), there is the following statement:
- i. "When you read the Law, do not think yourself bound to observe the additional precepts; though not all of them, yet some of them. Read those barely for the sake of history, in order to the knowledge of them, and to glorify God that He has delivered you from such great and so many bonds.
  - ii. "Propose to yourself to distinguish what rules were from the law of nature, and what were added afterwards, or were such additional rules as were introduced and given in the Wilderness to the Israelites after the making of the calf; for the law contains those precepts which were spoken by the Lord God before the people fell into idolatry, and made a calf like the Egyptian Apis—that is, the Ten Commandments.
  - iii. "But as to those bonds which were further laid upon them after they had sinned, do not draw them upon yourself: for our Saviour came for no other reason but that He might deliver those that were obnoxious thereto from the wrath which was reserved for them, that He might fulfil the Law and the Prophets, and that He might abrogate or change those secondary bonds which were superadded to the rest of the Law."
  - iv. (Source: *Apostolic Constitutions*, Book 1, section 2, chapter 6; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 393)

- iv. What was Aaron thinking? What should he have done instead?
1. He should have known better, but he gave in to the pressure from all the people.
  2. His reaction under pressure reminded me of the sin of Saul, who was king before David.
    - a. Read **1 Samuel 13:5-13** (designated **1 Kingdoms 13** in the LXX).
      - i. The Israelites became impatient and fearful. Saul couldn't wait, saw he was losing the allegiance of his people, and took matters into his own hands in an attempt to defeat the Philistines. He directly disobeyed a command of the Lord and lost the kingdom as a result.
    - b. Later, in the battle against King Agag and the Amalekites, Saul is told by Samuel he must *utterly destroy* them, sparing no one and nothing. However, he caves in to pressure from his army and spares the king and the best of the possessions of the Amalekites.
      - i. Read **1 Samuel 15:7-9** and **15:13-24**.
        1. The problem: Saul *feared the people* and heeded their voice.
        2. He had more fear of the people than *fear of God*.
  3. Aaron and Saul provide, through their bad examples, an important lesson for us regarding spiritual leadership. The No. 1 responsibility of a spiritual leader (including church leaders, mothers and fathers) is to be a good shepherd who looks out *for the good of the flock*, guards against the wolf, and calls the people to obey the word of the Lord. Good spiritual leaders must *fear God*, rather than those they are leading.
    - a. The good spiritual leader is not trying to win a popularity contest with those he is leading (nor with other leaders).
      - i. An elder should be seeking a "well done, good and faithful servant" (**Matthew 25:21** and **25:23**) on the Last Day, from the Chief Shepherd

(1 Peter 5:1-4). This same goal should to all who are responsible for leading others spiritually.

- b. Paul told Timothy: “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready *in season and out of season*. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:1-5, NKJV)
  - i. The leader is to speak the truth to people based on the Word of God, “Thus says the Lord...” in season and out of season (when it’s popular *as well as when it’s not*).

### III. Patience versus Impatience

- a. This characteristic of patience/perseverance/longsuffering is critically important for us to reach our objective in this spiritual journey.
  - i. Read **James 5:7-11**.
  - ii. Read **Hebrews 12:1-3** and **12:7-17**.
    - 1. Let us *follow the example of Jesus*, who patiently endured the trials and suffering He had to go through in His own life.
    - 2. We *must endure* when God chastens us. Don’t get discouraged and give up!
    - 3. Consider the (bad) example of Esau selling his birthright for some stew. He was impatient, could not wait, wanted pleasure for his flesh immediately, and lost his birthright as a result.
      - a. **Question:** How many sins can you think of that have *impatience* as the root or enabler? A few examples that come to mind include:
        - i. Immorality (wanting pleasures of the flesh *right now*)

- ii. Theft (Rather than taking the time to work and save, want to get the wealth right now by grabbing it from someone else)
  - iii. Vengeance (wanting to see justice immediately, rather than waiting for God to repay the offender on the Day of Judgment)
  - iv. Unrighteous anger (again, coming out of impatience)
- iii. The extended discussion in **Hebrews 10-12** on the importance of perseverance starts with the following statement:
1. “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For *you have need of endurance*, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, And *He who is coming will come and will not tarry*. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (**Hebrews 10:35–39**, NKJV)
  2. Here the Hebrews writer is quoting and explaining the significance of **Habakkuk 2:1-4** (from the LXX), where it says:
    - a. *He who is coming will not tarry* or delay (so don’t get impatient).
    - b. My righteous one shall *live by faith* (pointing to a *way of life*); and
    - c. *If he shrinks back*, my soul will not be pleased with him.
      - i. Note that this phrase, quoted by the Hebrews writer, is found in the LXX text but not in the Masoretic Text.
- b. Tertullian, an early Christian writer from Carthage, North Africa, writing c. 200 AD addressed the importance of Christian patience in a work titled *Of Patience* (found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 3, pp. 707-717).
- i. Tertullian begins this work with a brutally honest admission about his own weaknesses in the area of patience. However, despite his own struggles and shortcomings, he is convicted that he needs to write to warn others of the importance of patience. (I personally can relate, as someone who by nature also can tend to be very impatient!)

- ii. Summary of Tertullian's argument:
  - 1. Patience of God
    - a. He sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous (**Matthew 5:45**).
    - b. He is holding off the Day of Judgment, wanting as many as possible to be saved (**2 Peter 3:9**).
  - 2. Patience of Christ
    - a. He was patient and humble to be born a human, grow up into adulthood.
    - b. He was patient in enduring the suffering of the cross.
  - 3. Impatience of Satan, and in first sins of Eve and Adam
    - a. Satan as the author of impatience and uses impatience to tempt Eve into the first sin of the human race.
  - 4. Impatience is the first step to all kinds of sin
    - a. Example of Israel in the Wilderness, with the golden calf.
  - 5. Patience as the root of all virtues, including as related to:
    - a. Nonresistance
    - b. Sexual purity
    - c. Humility
    - d. Long-suffering
    - e. All of the beatitudes (**Matthew 5, Luke 6**)
    - f. Not retaliating, even in words
- iii. Tertullian made the case that Satan is the originator of impatience, and used that to introduce sin into our world. Impatience has been the root of so much sin throughout history, including the example of impatience of the people in making the golden calf while Moses was on the mountain. Consider the argument he makes:
  - 1. "Let us therefore consider, concerning impatience, whether just as patience in God, so its adversary quality have been born and detected in our adversary [Satan], that from this

consideration may appear how primarily adverse it is to faith. For that which has been conceived by God's rival, of course is not friendly to God's things. The discord of things is the same as the discord of their authors. Further, since God is best, the devil on the contrary worst, of beings, by their own very diversity they testify that neither works for the other; so that anything of good can no more seem to be effected for us by the Evil One, than anything of evil by the Good.

2. "Therefore I detect the nativity of impatience in the devil himself, at that very time when he impatiently bore that the Lord God subjected the universal works which He had made to His own image, that is, to man. For if he had endured (that), he would not have grieved; nor would he have envied man if he had not grieved. Accordingly he deceived him, because he had envied him; but he had envied because he had grieved: he had grieved because, of course, he had not patiently borne.
3. "What that angel of perdition first was—malicious or impatient—I scorn to inquire: since manifest it is that either impatience took its rise together with malice, or else malice from impatience; that subsequently they conspired between themselves; and that they grew up indivisible in one paternal bosom. But, however, having been instructed, by his own experiment, what an aid unto sinning was that which he had been the first to feel, and by means of which he had entered on his course of delinquency, he called the same to his assistance for the thrusting of man into crime.
4. "The woman, immediately on being met by him—I may say so without rashness—was, through his very speech with her, breathed on by a spirit infected with impatience: so certain is it that she would never have sinned at all, if she had honoured the divine edict by maintaining her patience to the end. What (of the fact) that she endured not to have been met alone; but in the presence of Adam, not yet her husband, not yet bound to lend her his ears, she is impatient of keeping silence, and makes him the transmitter of that which she had imbibed from the Evil One?
5. "Therefore another human being, too, perishes through the impatience of the one; presently, too, perishes of himself, through his own impatience committed in each respect, both in regard of God's premonition and in regard of the devil's cheaterly; not enduring to observe the former nor to refute the latter. Hence, whence (the origin) of delinquency, arose the

first origin of judgment; hence, whence man was induced to offend, God began to be wroth. Whence (came) the first indignation in God, then (came) His first patience; who, content at that time with malediction only, refrained in the devil's case from the instant infliction of punishment.

6. "Else what crime, before this guilt of impatience, is imputed to man? Innocent he was, and in intimate friendship with God, and the husbandman of paradise. But when once he succumbed to impatience, he quite ceased to be of sweet savour to God; he quite ceased to be able to endure things celestial. Thenceforward, a creature given to earth, and ejected from the sight of God, he begins to be easily turned by impatience unto every use offensive to God. For straightway that impatience conceived of the devil's seed, produced, in the fecundity of malice, anger as her son; and when brought forth, trained him in her own arts.
7. "For that very thing which had immersed Adam and Eve in death, taught their son, too, to begin with murder. It would be idle for me to ascribe this to impatience, if Cain, that first homicide and first fratricide, had borne with equanimity and not impatiently the refusal by the Lord of his own oblations—if he is not wroth with his own brother—if, finally, he took away no one's life. Since, then, he could neither have killed unless he had been wroth, nor have been wroth unless he had been impatient, he demonstrates that what he did through wrath must be referred to that by which wrath was suggested during this cradle-time of impatience, then (in a certain sense) in her infancy. But how great presently were her augmentations! And no wonder, If she has been the first delinquent, it is a consequence that, because she has been the first, therefore she is the only parent stem, too, to every delinquency, pouring down from her own fount various veins of crimes.
8. "Of murder we have spoken; but, being from the very beginning the outcome of anger, whatever causes besides it shortly found for itself it lays collectively on the account of impatience, as to its own origin. For whether from private enmities, or for the sake of prey, any one perpetrates that wickedness, the earlier step is his becoming impatient of either the hatred or the avarice. Whatever compels a man, it is not possible that without impatience of itself it can be perfected in deed.

9. "Who ever committed adultery without impatience of lust? Moreover, if in females the sale of their modesty is forced by the price, of course it is by impatience of contemning gain that this sale is regulated. These (I mention) as the principal delinquencies in the sight of the Lord, for, to speak compendiously, every sin is ascribable to impatience. 'Evil' is 'impatience of good.'
  10. "None immodest is not impatient of modesty; dishonest of honesty; impious of piety; unquiet of quietness. In order that each individual may become evil he will be unable to persevere in being good. How, therefore, can such a hydra [= *multi-headed snakelike monster of Greek mythology*] of delinquencies fail to offend the Lord, the Disapprover of evils?
  11. "Is it not manifest that it was through impatience that Israel himself also always failed in his duty toward God, from that time when, forgetful of the heavenly arm whereby he had been drawn out of his Egyptian affliction, he demands from Aaron 'gods as his guides;' when he pours down for an idol the contributions of his gold: for the so necessary delays of Moses, while he met with God, he had borne with impatience. After the edible rain of the manna, after the watery following of the rock, they despair of the Lord in not enduring a three-days' thirst; for this also is laid to their charge by the Lord as impatience.
  12. "And—not to rove through individual cases—there was no instance in which it was not by failing in duty through impatience that they perished. How, moreover, did they lay hands on the prophets [*to persecute or kill them -CP*], except through impatience of hearing them? On the Lord moreover Himself, through impatience likewise of seeing Him? But had they entered the path of patience, they would have been set free."
    - a. (Source: Tertullian, *Of Patience*, chapter 5; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, pp. 709–711)
- iv. Tertullian said regarding not retaliating *when people speak evil of us*; we should be patient and follow the example of Jesus.
1. "If the tongue's bitterness break out in malediction or reproach, look back at the saying, 'When they curse you, rejoice.' (**Luke 6:22-23**) The Lord Himself was 'cursed' in the eye of the law; (**Galatians 3:13**) and yet is He the only Blessed One. Let us servants, therefore, follow our Lord closely; and be cursed patiently, that we may be able to be blessed."

- a. (Source: Tertullian, *Of Patience*, chapter 8; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 712)
- v. Tertullian also wrote about how and why Christians should exhibit patience *in the face of the death of loved ones* among us. With the loss of one of the very dear members of our own fellowship this year, perhaps we can find some encouragement here as well. They still exist, and we will meet with them again, but we must be patient.
1. “Not even that species of impatience under the loss of our dear ones is excused, where some assertion of a right to grief acts the patron to it. For the consideration of the apostle’s declaration must be set before us, who says, ‘Do not be overwhelmed with sadness at the falling asleep of anyone, just as the nations are who are without hope.’ (**1 Thessalonians 4:13**) And justly; or, believing the resurrection of Christ we believe also in our own, for whose sake He both died and rose again.
  2. “Since, then, there is certainty as to the resurrection of the dead, grief for death is needless, and impatience of grief is needless. For why should you grieve, if you believe that (your loved one) is not perished? Why should you bear impatiently the temporary withdrawal of him who you believe will return? That which you think to be death is departure. He who goes before us is not to be lamented, though by all means to be longed for.
  3. “That longing also must be tempered with patience. For why should you bear without moderation the fact that one is gone away whom you will presently follow? Besides, impatience in matters of this kind bodes ill for our hope, and is a dealing insincerely with the faith. And we wound Christ when we accept not with equanimity the summoning out of this world of any by Him, as if they were to be pitied. ‘I desire,’ says the apostle, ‘to be now received, and to be with Christ.’ (**Philippians 1:23**) How far better a desire does he exhibit! If, then, we grieve impatiently over such as have attained the desire of Christians, we show unwillingness ourselves to attain it.”
    - a. (Source: Tertullian, *Of Patience*, chapter 9; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 713).
- vi. Tertullian closes his short treatise on patience with the following charge to all Christians:

1. "Let us... love the patience of God, the patience of Christ; let us repay to Him the patience which He has paid down for us! Let us offer to Him the patience of the spirit, the patience of the flesh, believing as we do in the resurrection of flesh and spirit."
  - a. (Source: Tertullian, *Of Patience*, chapter 16; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 717)

#### IV. Another Look at the Story of Moses' Return and the Golden Calf

- a. The Lord told the Israelites that in the future, He would raise up a prophet "like Moses" from among their brothers, whom they must listen to (**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**). We know that promise was fulfilled by Jesus, as explained in **Acts 3:22** and **Acts 7:37**.
- b. With that in view, perhaps we should take one more look back at the story of Moses' delay in returning from Mount Sinai and the Israelites constructing and worshipping the golden calf, to see if this might foreshadow something in the mission of Jesus.
- c. Let's review this part of the story of Moses one more time, to see if we see anything that might point to Christ. The main details of the story of Moses and the golden calf include:
  - i. Jewish prophet/savior/deliverer *departs* from the people *to be with God*.
  - ii. With a promise that *he will return*, he *ascends* and is *hidden from view by a cloud*.
  - iii. The people he left behind *do not know when* he will return.
  - iv. While he is gone, many of his followers *tire of waiting during the delay, grow skeptical of his promised return* and therefore *revert to their old ways of sin*.
  - v. When he suddenly returns, the people are caught by surprise, unprepared, and it is '*judgment day*'.
  - vi. He is the one who *obtains mercy from God* on behalf of the people. He *intercedes, sparing them from death* that they deserved and otherwise would have received.
- d. Now, let us consider similar details *in the life of Jesus*.
  - i. Read **Acts 1:4-11**.
    1. When Jesus departs, to heaven:

- a. He *ascends* to heaven, to be with God;
- b. He is *hidden from view by a cloud*; and
- c. the angels say that *He will return*.

ii. Read **Matthew 24:32-51**.

1. His return will catch people by surprise and unprepared, as the Flood did in the days of Noah.
2. He will come at an hour we do not expect.
3. If he finds us as unfaithful servants upon his return, we will pay a terrible price.

iii. Read **Matthew 25:1-13**.

1. Jesus tells the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids to teach about His return.
2. The bridegroom is delayed in returning.
3. When He returns suddenly, the foolish bridesmaids are caught unprepared.
4. This parable closes with Jesus warning:
  - a. "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (**Matthew 25:13**, NKJV)

iv. Read **2 Peter 3:1-18**.

1. Peter warns that scoffers will come who will question whether Jesus is ever coming back. However, remember how (suddenly) the Flood of Noah came and brought destruction on the ungodly.
  2. The Lord is not *slow* in returning, but is delaying the Last Day *so that more people can come to repentance*.
  3. That day will come "as a thief in the night".
  4. We must be diligent to be found blameless when He returns.
- e. The lesson of the golden calf was written *for us*. We are now the ones waiting for our Lord's return. We must be prepared for the Lord's return at any time, *no matter how long it takes* for Him to come back.

- i. Aaron *should have* stationed a guard to watch until Moses' return and made sure that the people were prepared. He should have *feared God*, not the people.
- ii. Let us watch and be prepared for when He (Jesus) returns. He ascended and disappeared into a cloud, but *He is coming back!*