

Moses, Aaron, and the Golden Calf

by Richard Owen Roberts

The sermon emphasizes the urgent need for revival and God's presence, illustrated through the story of Moses and Aaron's leadership failures with the golden calf.

Duration: 56:36

Scripture: Exodus 32:7-14, Psalm 139:23-24, Isaiah 63:7-19, Romans 11:11, Hebrews 11:39-40

Topics: "Intercessory Prayer", "Revival Transformation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's presence in the midst of revival, highlighting the need to remove hindrances that prevent God from drawing near. It delves into the story of Moses interceding for the people of Israel, showcasing the shift from a threatened final judgment to a remedial judgment through effective intercession. The sermon challenges listeners to see what God sees, feel what God feels, and take action to seek revival and transformation in their lives and nation.

Transcript

Now tell me precisely the times. Okay, right here is the five minutes till right now, and you're going till ten minutes till. So you have fifty-five minutes.

I've never been involved in a situation quite like this, where there's just guaranteed four rows that are empty, and I hardly dare to ask you to close in because I expect the kids are supposed to come back. The kids will be coming back, but I think that probably you, I believe now the one that was sitting up here this morning, do you notice he's one, two, three rows back? So he must have got under conviction, I think, as a result of this morning. Maybe I better not step back there for fear of losing the next three rows.

Now a great theme for the week is as clear to all of you, is revival, which goes by many wonderful names, spiritual awakening, refreshing, outpouring, blessing from on high, pentecost. I wrote an article some years ago which was published to simply entitle the nomenclature of revival. Many wonderful terms describing it, but as I hope to help you to realize this morning, at the very center of the whole concept of revival is God in the midst of his people.

And our great concern this week is to make sure that there is nothing left in us that will hinder God drawing near. So this evening I want to talk about some Old Testament characters who knew something extremely significant and vital about a walk with God, but who, because of various circumstances in their lives, lost to a very significant degree what they knew. We began this evening with one of the most illustrious

characters of the entire Bible, a man who was actually used by God to bring about the first great revival that occurred in the history of Israel.

I'll share just a few moments about this incredible circumstance, and many of you are well acquainted with this. But beginning in Exodus chapter 32, you'll recall that Moses was called up into the mountain to spend time with God. A protracted season, in truth, 40 days.

And during his absence, the people were muttering and complaining and making such ridiculous statements as, As for this Moses, we, and I'm quoting the King James now, we want not, W-O-T, not the word most of you have used recently, we want not what has become of him. A perfectly ridiculous and erroneous statement, because they knew perfectly well that God had called Moses up into the mountain and was busy giving to Moses the two tables of the law, the Ten Commandments. But you remember, don't you, what happened at that time? The people, in all their muttering and complaining and declaring they didn't know what happened to Moses, urged Aaron, the co-pastor, if you will, to create a god for them that they could worship.

The difficulty is still with us today, worshiping the unseen, the one that you've never heard speak directly. And so Aaron, a very able man, asked the people to turn in some of their gold, and he fashioned it into a golden calf. And after the calf was brought out of the fire, the people engaged not only in the worship of this golden calf, using words that are hard to believe, saying, this is the very God that brought us out of Egypt.

And they involved themselves in an orgy involving conduct that was utterly deplorable. And Aaron missed the greatest opportunity of his lifetime. And some of us are very good at missing wonderful opportunities.

For at a time when Aaron should have called the people to repentance, he made for them the golden calf. All of us, in any form of service for Christ, are very much in danger of serving the desires of the people instead of obeying the word of the Lord. But when Moses was on the mountain with God, this may sound simplistic, but it's important truth, that's where Moses was, on the mountain with God.

But when God was on the mountain with Moses, he was also on the plain with the people. Now, friends, lay hold of this simple but immensely important truth. In order to feel what God feels, you have to see what God sees.

While Moses was on the mountain, he didn't see what was going on on the plain. But when he came down from the mountain and was nearing the camp of Israel, he heard the noise, the confusion, the amusement, the shouts, the glee. And then he saw with his own eyes the people worshiping the golden calf.

And you remember, don't you, that he took these two tables of stone that he was carrying and he smashed them. Now, friends, I wish I could somehow drill this into every single mind and heart. But some of us don't have any real concern for revival because we don't see what God sees.

We see things and we're okay with what we see. We don't see how bad the situation is in our churches and in our land. Some of you never involve yourself in a serious prayer meeting because you don't really feel the urgency of the times.

Some of you have never really earnestly pled with God to come in great power and majesty and transform our church situation because you don't see how desperate it is. But I want to urge you to open your eyes this week and see what God sees. See this incredibly large array of professing Christians who cannot be

distinguished from the world in which we live.

Are you aware at all of the statistics that are involved? I told a couple of folk today that now, out of every ten men who enter the ministry in their youth, only one is still in service for the Lord when they reach retirement age. Nine out of ten become dropouts. Every indication that can be found suggests that 60% of all men in ministry are addicted to internet pornography.

Now if 60% of the ministers are in that fix, what percentage of the people are in the same? We need to see what God sees. Once you see what God sees, you'll begin to feel what God feels. And when you feel what God feels, you're going to change.

So Moses on the mountain didn't see the conduct of the people on the plain, and therefore he didn't feel what God felt. And do you remember what God spoke to Moses? God said to Moses, Get out of the way, Moses. I'm going to go down there and utterly destroy those people.

Now think about the seriousness of that. For God adds, Out of you, Moses, you alone, Moses, I will raise me up a people unto my name. Now I know that technical terms are not always necessary, but still we have enough time this week to lay hold of some biblical concepts and give correct terms to those.

That is called a threatened final judgment. Let me repeat it just so it's crystal clear. Get out of the way, Moses.

I'm going to go down there and utterly destroy those people. In the Bible there are two judgments that are concurrent with sin. Now think carefully.

Usually when the word judgment is used, we're thinking of the future. Some of you have heard of the great white throne judgment. And most of us know that we are going to stand before our eternal judge and give an account for ourselves.

So usually when the term judgment is employed, we think in terms of the future or what we might technically call eschatological judgments, and they certainly exist. But friends, God is always on time with everything he does. When you speak in terms of revival, a very key word in understanding revival is judicial timeliness.

God is never late. Now we live in a society where there is no such thing as judicial timeliness. We're used to reading and hearing about a murderer who has been observed by say a dozen eyewitnesses and 14 years later they're still fooling around in court pretending to enact justice.

But God is never even 15 seconds late. When a person sins and does not repent, they are then and there under God's righteous judgment. But some people find that very hard to understand and they certainly aren't prepared to embrace it because they're thinking, as I said already, about judgment as a future matter.

And there is indeed future judgment. But I'm talking about judgments that are concurrent with sin. So when God says to Moses, get out of the way, I'm going to go down and utterly destroy those people.

He's talking about, as I just said, a threatened final judgment. Now listen carefully. A final judgment is a judgment in which death and destruction occur.

That's plain in the words, isn't it? I'll utterly destroy those people. But that's not God's favorite form of judgment. God much prefers what we call remedial judgments.

Now listen carefully. I know the word remedial is not one in daily usage, but some of you are school teachers or maybe you had a child who was a slow learner and that child was put in a remedial reading class. And you know that the term remedial is a catch-up kind of a term.

Here this child is behind, so they're given special help and treatment so that they can catch up, so that they'll be with the rest of their class. Now God's preferred form of judgment, and again I remind you, I'm speaking of judgment that is concurrent with sin, is remedial judgments. Now listen.

A remedial judgment is a gracious judgment and a judgment that does provide time and opportunity for repentance. So you've got that clear. I trust two basic forms of judgment concurrent with sin.

Final and remedial. Now let's pretend that this is a classroom and surely you should be participating with me in these meetings this week. Let me put to you a question and expect from somewhere in the audience a response.

Name a final judgment that is clear-cut in the New Testament. Come along now, speak up, I'm an old man. Yes, exactly, Ananias and Sapphira.

Now just for a moment think of this. Did Peter say to Ananias, now if you'll go through that doorway over there, you'll discover it leads to the prayer room. I want you to make your way to the prayer room and see if you can't find some cause for repentance.

No, friends, not at all. The lie was told, it was confirmed, and death. And then the other came in, repeated the lie, it was confirmed, and death.

A final destruction, a final judgment is a judgment of death, of destruction, where there is neither time nor opportunity for repentance. Now if the question were asked, what do we deserve in America? Final judgment? I want you to feel this, I hope you can. This morning, I mentioned to a few folk this morning, in preaching to a group of ministers recently, and I read three verses from the last portion of Nehemiah chapter 9. I'll not read them now, but I'll recite the essence of those verses.

The people covered themselves with dirt, and they sat, weeping, fasting, and then they all stood together, and for a quarter part of the day, they listened to the word of God as it was read. And then, for another quarter part of the day, they openly, publicly confessed their sins. And I asked the group of pastors, when was the last time you were involved in a meeting as serious as that? And nobody replied.

So I broadened it and said, whenever in your life were you involved in a meeting that serious? And again, nobody replied. How many of you have covered yourselves with dirt, and sat in a bed of ashes, weeping over your sin? Now listen. Listen.

What the people in the Old Testament received from the kind hand of God was virtually nothing in comparison with what each of us has received. The book of Hebrews has a profound statement at the end of chapter 11 about this. All of these, it says, speaking of Israel, were acceptable to God.

They gained acceptance with God. But, they did not get the promise, because God had something better for us. That they, without us, should not be made perfect.

And what was the promise that no one in the Old Testament got? They didn't get Christ. If you think about it, every single person in this room has received more than Moses, or David, or Solomon, or any other character in the Old Testament. They received a lot, but they didn't receive anywhere near as much as we've received.

Oh, they had something of the word of God. Have you ever turned in your Bible to the end of the book of Deuteronomy, as I'm going to do right now, and then said, what portion of the Bible does that constitute? They didn't have the whole word of God like we do. They had but a fraction of it.

They had a high priest who died, and then another one who died, and another one who died, and another one who died. But we've got one high priest who is ever living. They had sacrifices and offerings that had to be regularly made.

But we've had one sacrifice sufficient for all of our sin. They had touches of the Holy Spirit that we have received the Holy Spirit who has come to fill us and empower us. Many of them stood absolutely alone.

But we have the Christian church and the fellowship of other believers and the preaching of the word of God. Now, dear friends, it is crystal clear in Scripture to whom much is given, much is required. And everyone in the room tonight has received more than Moses received.

But we act as if we've received virtually nothing. We've taken for granted what we've received. We've acted abusively toward what we've received.

We act as if it's our right. And every one of us, without any exception, should be more deeply grateful than any person in the entire Old Testament. And every one of us should be more faithful and totally committed to Christ than anybody in the pages of the Old Covenant.

And if we're not, shame on us. And let us not waste another day. Let's get serious.

Because the very Prince of Peace, the King of Glory, the Creator of the heavens and earth, is ours. And we are His. Now, in the light of the threatened final judgment that God gave to Moses, what did he do? Did he just slink away in a cowardly fashion? No.

Now listen, friends. I hope this is clear to you. Moses got right in God's face.

God said to him, Step aside so I can go down and utterly destroy the people. But instead of stepping aside, he got, as I just said, right in God's face. And he argued with God.

And he presented two major arguments that you ought to be acquainted with. Number one, he said, What will the Egyptians think? After all, under Joseph's leadership, Israel was brought into Egypt and remained there for 400 years. Initially, it was a favorable position, but it became an intolerable position.

And God, exercising His mighty arm, brought Israel out of Egypt. And they haven't been out very long before they're worshipping the golden calves. And God has threatened to destroy them.

But Moses raises the argument. What will the Egyptians say? Now maybe you don't know how to pray for revival, but there's a pretty clear indication of a direction you ought to take. And I don't see a single person in the room now who ought to avoid this.

Every one of us should take this as seriously as is humanly possible to take any word from the Lord. Is it not wise to say, Lord, this was for a long time the major mission-sending nation of the world. The whole world has heard of Christ in some measure because we gave our hearts and our pocketbooks to the Lord in order that the whole world might share the glories of the gospel of Christ.

What if you destroy America now? What will the nations of the world say? He brought them out of a howling wilderness just over 200 years ago only to destroy them now. God does not delight in destruction. He makes it crystal clear.

He does not favor the death of the wicked. God delights in grace, in mercy, in long-suffering. He would like nothing better than to send to America a wonderful season of refreshing that we might return to him again and embrace him as the Lord and Savior not only of our hearts, but of our land.

The second argument that Moses utilized was what about the promises that are not yet fulfilled? Promises to Isaac, Jacob. How, if you destroy these people now, will you be able to keep those promises? And dear friends, there are still some promises to be fulfilled. Let me mention one in particular.

In the 11th chapter of the book of Romans, it is made crystal clear that at some point the holiness of the Gentile church will provoke Israel to jealousy. I suppose it will look something like this. The Jews will look at the Christians and say, that's not fair! Why should all the blessing of God be theirs when Christ is our Messiah? And they'll come to Christ in great numbers.

Now I know some like to push that off into another age. They don't see any relevancy today. But I'm not with those who cut the Bible up into pieces like that.

I believe that it's God's intent that we should live such holy, happy lives. But the Jews are provoked to jealousy and turned to Christ in great numbers. Now I understand God doesn't have to have America to accomplish that.

He can accomplish that in China. I was with two missionaries from China last week and they were sharing something of what is happening there. Millions and millions of people turning to Christ.

And almost unbelievably I was asked to participate in publishing Christian literature in China itself. Because the government has now given permission to publish evangelical literature on government printing presses to be distributed throughout China. And they've even given approval to some of the books that our own churches look at saying, oh, that's old-fashioned religion.

That's not up to date enough for us. But the real material that has blessed this land in former years. But then the missionary said to me, the one great danger that China now faces is persecution is apparently over.

And thus the Chinese church is as ripe to go rotten as has the American church because it cost us nothing to serve Christ. But understand I'm saying God isn't in no hurry to bring judgment. But he can and he will and his justice is never tardy.

And it's never compromised. But Moses being faced with this reality, get out of the way, so I can go down and utterly destroy them intercedes effectively. And many of you remember this wonderful story.

The Lord said, all right, because you insist, I will not destroy them. When Moses came down, as I indicated already, in frustration and anger, he broke the tables of the law and he ordered the death of the ringleaders. And some 3,000 were put to death.

But now, follow me carefully, friends. God then said to Moses, go on, get moving, lead these people to the place where I'm sending you. I will not go with you myself.

I will send an angel before you. Have you ever weighed that? I'm talking about Exodus 32, 33. You could be following it in the text if you wanted to.

I'm just giving you summary statements of what it says there. Let me repeat what I just said. Go on, get moving, lead these people to the place where I've commanded you, but I'll not go with you myself because you are a stiff-necked people and if I went with you, I would destroy you on the way.

Now, do you see what's happened? A threatened final judgment is altered and it is now a threatened remedial judgment. I won't go with you myself. I'll send an angel.

Now, I don't doubt that some of you have had circumstances in life when if the Lord said to you, go on, get moving, I'll send an angel before you, you would clap and dance and shout hallelujah. But now, let's get things straight. These people had not been led by an angel, but by what we call the Shekinah glory, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, by the manifest presence of God.

And dropping from the manifest presence of God to the leadership of an angel is a huge change. But Moses was not content with that and Moses said, if you don't go with us, we're not going anywhere. And God liked that.

And God said, alright, I will go with you. Do you follow? This is a beautiful picture of what we ought to be doing right now. God has not destroyed America, but he has given us a series of remedial judgments.

Earthquakes, storms of various sorts, loathsome diseases, terrorist attacks. Now the terrorists have only just begun. God has kept them under restraint.

But many of you are aware that there are five million Muslims living in the United States. Think soberly. Nobody dares to say what percentage of professing Christians are real.

Some have estimated 10%. In safety, I say not more than 30%. Probably fewer than that.

But just use these figures which I'm just plucking out of the air. What if 10% of the Muslims living in America are committed Muslims and share the commitment to destroy this nation? Have you stopped to realize what 500,000 people already here could do by way of destruction? There are certain things that we ought to face realistically. But now I want to bring another dimension into this.

And I'm going to ask you to turn to a biblical passage. We shall return in a few moments to this account in Exodus. But turn just briefly now to the book of Isaiah where I want to ask you to face very seriously words that appear in chapter 63.

So, Isaiah 63. And let me read a portion of this to you. Isaiah, in his day, is facing a situation similar to what we're facing in America right now.

I pick up the reading at verse 7. So, Isaiah 63 at verse 7. I shall make mention of the loving kindnesses of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us. And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them, according to His compassion and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses. For He said, Surely these are My people, sons who will not deal falsely.

So He became their Savior. In all their affliction, He was afflicted. And the angel of His presence saved them.

In His love and in His mercy, He redeemed them. And He lifted them and He carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit.

Therefore, He turned Himself and became their enemy. He fought against them. Now, think of what that means.

Maybe you have said sometime, If God before us, who can be against us? Well, that's a nice saying. And a wonderful truth at that. But did you ever hear anybody say, If God is against us, what does it matter who's for us? God was grieved and He turned Himself and He became Israel's enemy.

And He fought against them. Can you picture that in our day and in our nation? No amount of money will prevail when God is our enemy. No technology is going to serve us when God is against us.

So this I want you to understand. A threatened final judgment altered to a threatened remedial judgment will change if the remedial judgment is unheeded. An unheeded remedial judgment will become a final judgment.

If you were to read carefully through this portion of Isaiah 63 and through chapter 64, you would discover some very alarming things. Let me just pinpoint two or three things that are stated here. Verse 15.

Look down from heaven and see from thy holy and glorious habitation where are thy zeal and thy mighty deeds. Now we have been a nation in decline ever since the end of the Second World War. We've not had a single upturn.

But the condition of America today is dramatically worse than the same date last year. And we have every anticipation that it will grow still worse in the next 12 months. And the day clearly will come when we will be asking the Lord where are thy zeal? Where is thy affection toward us? We were once a very favored nation.

You could not describe another nation on earth that has enjoyed the blessings of God to the extent that we have enjoyed them in America. But we have grieved God. We have offended His Holy Spirit.

He has graciously sent us a series of remedial judgments including 9-11 just as a tiny taste of what could happen. But what was the result of 9-11? Oh, a few days of religious flurry and activity. But within three weeks all the impression was passed in terms of the kind of an impression that can result in good.

And we are much worse now than before 9-11. And growing worse as I've indicated every single day. And look also in chapter 63.

And look at verse 17. Why, O Lord, dost thou cause us to stray from thy ways and harden our hearts from fearing thee? Have you ever weighed those words? Can you imagine a God of love causing His own

people to stray from His ways? Well, if you're my age you don't have any difficulty figuring it out. I'll be personal for a moment.

Through some unusual circumstances I was introduced to public preaching of the word when I was 13 years of age. And by the time I was 16 I had a considerable amount of preaching experience. I served the first church when I was in college.

And it was a church that had lost its minister because he was put in jail on two charges. Embezzlement of church funds and sexual misconduct. It was shocking to me.

I didn't really believe that it could be true. I couldn't imagine a man in ministry engaged in that kind of conduct. But the evidence was there and I could not go on denying.

But listen, friends. It was years and years before I heard of another incident like that. But now it's not uncommon for me to have seven reports in a single week of men in ministry involved in scandalous activity.

And I ask this question. How did a relatively decent nation become the most vile nation on earth? How did a nation that once enjoyed the incredible hand of God's blessing upon it in multitudes of ways turn aside and become the world leader in the distribution of evil? And the only explanation that I know is biblical. You could come up with fanciful thoughts.

You could say, well, you see, the devil used to have three manufacturing plants in which he produced demons. They worked a five-day week and an eight-hour day. But he decided to put all of those factories on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week shift and he added 12 more factories so demons by the millions had been unleashed against America.

But that's too fanciful for me. It's much more realistic to ask the question, what happens when a police force goes on strike? Well, we have some historical situations in a Canadian city. The people from the wealthy portions of the city when the police were on strike went into the commercial district, smashed out store windows, stole everything of any value.

Sometimes when you observe police cars parked in front of diners and you know that the police officers are sitting in there smoking and joking, you feel as if your tax money is being abused. But in actual fact, the great deterrent to crime is the existence, the physical presence of law and order. Some of you have had experiences like I have some time back.

I was driving home from my office in an old vehicle and the police car was following me. It was a highway with a curb and no place to pull off. So when I saw his lights blinking, I was naturally quite riled.

But I couldn't imagine what I had done wrong. But there was no place to turn off so I had to go on cautiously. The next time I glanced, the lights were not blinking.

But then a moment later they were blinking. And I didn't know how to appraise the whole matter but then suddenly it dawned on me. The rays of the sun are such that they're hitting the lenses of the police lights and making them appear to be blinking red.

So I felt the tiniest measure of relief but I didn't know any real relief until we came to the next major intersection. I went straight ahead, he turned left and suddenly I broke out into the clear. You know what

I'm talking about.

The manifest presence of law and order has remarkable impact upon us. Soon after that, having been preaching for two weeks in New Mexico, I was standing at the gate of the Albuquerque Airport waiting for my flight to be called and I just glanced over my shoulder and there was a policeman staring at me. And I wondered why.

And then I thought, well, there were a lot of people in the meetings I didn't meet. Maybe he was there and was working up his courage to come and speak to me. But still he stood there staring.

So after a while I thought, well, I'll just sort of sashay backwards a little and see. And suddenly I realized it's nothing but a life-size piece of cardboard with a portrait of a policeman upon it. But the impact was the same as if he had been there with his gun drawn.

Now friends, the manifest presence of Christ in society, in the church, keeps evil down. We are under God's judgment, not final yet, but remedial. God has withdrawn his manifest presence.

Evil has erupted in the church. The statistics are clear. The divorce, remarriage rate in the church is the same, practically speaking, as in the world.

The abortion rate in the church, basically the same. The homosexual rate, worse in the evangelical movement than in the world at large. You look through all the statistics and the church is virtually the same as the world, or in two places, worse than the world.

And how do you explain it? The lack of God's manifest presence. So God makes it clear to Moses, go on, get moving. I'll send an angel, but I won't go with you.

And what did Moses do? Well, I already said, Moses said, if you don't go with us, we're not going anywhere. And what did God say to Moses? Can't you be content? Don't you realize that I have already changed a threatened final judgment to a remedial judgment? Now go on, get moving. But no, it wasn't that bad.

God said, all right, Moses, I'll go with you. But Moses still wasn't content. And Moses said to the Lord, show me thy glory.

And the Lord said, you pig, are you never satisfied? No, no. The Lord said, all right, Moses, come back up to the mountain. I want you to stand in the cliff of the rock.

I'm going to cover you with my hand. And I'm going to cause all my goodness to pass before you. And Moses came down from the mountain so aglow because of the manifest presence of God.

But they had to cover him with a veil because the people couldn't stand to look at the brilliance of his shining countenance. How to act in a time of great evil. Here's a very powerful example.

Now friends, would it be wise for an old man like me to think that you will act as wisely as Moses? And I remind you, Moses didn't have a fraction of the blessings you've got. And suppose we do nothing. Suppose we just continue as we are.

And we let our nation be destroyed. All right. How are we going to explain ourselves when we stand in the final judgment? Oh, conceivably, someone here had never heard these truths before.

And you might feel you have some excuse because you didn't understand. But you do understand now. It all rests on our heads.

Revival can come. America can come back to God. But it's got to start somewhere.

And why not right here in your heart at this time? Will you tell the Lord of your availability to be used of him as one to stand in the gap in prayer for our nation. Lord, how we thank you for Moses and what we learn from him. For your precious word.

For the power of your spirit who speaks to our hearts. You used Moses May you use us, Lord. Begin your work in our hearts tonight.

In Jesus name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/zNVHiKb7xcc.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-owen-roberts/moses-aaron-and-the-golden-calf/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net