

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
September 11, 2016  
Exodus 32:7-14  
God Can't Argue with His Own Promises  
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Dear Friends in Christ,

Who could have blamed the holy God for losing it? He had saved Israel from slavery in Egypt. He had brought the nation safely to Sinai. The LORD had reminded his people of these gracious acts and revealed his holy will to guide and protect them.

What was Israel's thankful response? While Moses was up on the mountain, they called on his brother, Aaron, "Come, make us gods who will go before us." So Aaron melted their gold and cast two golden idols in the form of calves. Aaron told them, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." If that weren't enough, the people build an altar and brought sacrifices to the golden calves in worship.

The LORD did not lose it. Instead, he listened to Moses remind him about the promises he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the basis of those promises of the Savior, the LORD spared Israel, and he spares us. This is our comfort and confidence when we sin. **God Can't Argue with His Own Promises.** Moses pointed out those promises to God. God acted on those promises to his glory.

What God said to Moses about his people also applies to you and me. "They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them." Instead of obeying God's commands in thankfulness and praise for our deliverance from the slavery of sin, we daily transgress his commands. We build altars of devotion and celebrate the idols of materialism, success, relaxation, and self-interest. We do it in the weakness of our sinful flesh, against the will of our new man, but it is idolatry none the less.

We can be stubborn, stiff necked. We do not want to see our sin, or admit it to God or ourselves. In the bitter struggle of sin against our faith, we can reach the points of indifference and impenitence. This is an even more spiritually dangerous place to be.

In both cases, God has every right according his holy nature, and his word in the law, to bring his anger down on us in judgment. It is just as he told Moses about Israel, "Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them." However, God can't argue with his own promises.

As the faithful intercessor between God and his people, Moses spoke up on Israel's behalf. "Turn from your fierce anger and do not bring disaster on your people." As the basis for his request, Moses pointed out to God, as if God actually needed reminding, the earthly promises which included the promise of the coming Savior the LORD had made to three generations, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God had sworn those promises to them "by your own self." God can't argue with his own promises. "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them and it will be their inheritance forever." If God destroyed the nation, those promises would become null and void. God can't argue with his own promises.

Moses pulled out another excellent argument for God not to destroy his people. If God did that, the Egyptians would falsely accuse the LORD of evil intent. Remember this was something the people also did later by accusing the LORD of bringing them out into the desert to die. It would

have been a black mark on the LORD's power and mighty hand that delivered Israel from Egypt were he to end his grace to his people on account of their sins.

God's grace does not end to us on account of our daily sins. God has promised that in Christ he richly and daily forgives all our sins, including our idolatry. Why does the Lord do that? God can't argue with his promises. He has to keep them. He can't talk himself out of them, or change his mind about them. As Moses interceded for Israel, our risen and living Savior, now intercedes for us at the Father's right hand, reminding him of his forgiveness in Christ, as if the Father needed reminding.

Now as then, God acted on those promises to his glory. "Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened." First of all, the LORD did not change his mind. God is just and gracious at the same time in his divine attributes. The Holy Spirit gave Moses words to describe that shared justice and grace. God is changeless as are his threats and promises. They are changeless, the same day after day in Christ. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." [Hebrews 13:8]

The promises God has made in Christ are the same centuries before he came, today as we need them, and tomorrow both for time and eternity. God did not argue himself out of destroying Israel. He does not do that with us. His promises are sure because Jesus bore God's justice against our sins on his cross. God did not make threats of justice then not carry them out. He carried them out on his Son. God does not promise grace and then withhold it. Jesus is God's grace as the Father punished him as our Substitute.

Later, we hear God say to Moses after Moses went down to Aaron and the people and called them to repentance, "Whoever has sinned against me I will not blot out from my book." [v.33] This is to God's glory. It is in keeping with his justice and his grace. It is why the Lord our God is so dependable, and we are so eternally grateful. Amen. <SDG>