

Deuteronomy 9:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

Analysis

And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount. Moses' thorough destruction of the golden calf demonstrates the complete eradication required for idolatry - burning, crushing, grinding to dust, and dispersing in running water ensured no remnant remained.

This systematic annihilation pictures the total destruction of sin that God requires. Partial reformation is insufficient; idolatry must be completely removed. The Hebrew verbs emphasize progressive obliteration - each step more thoroughly destroys the idol until nothing identifiable remains.

Casting the dust into the flowing brook ensured permanent dispersal - the water would carry away even the microscopic particles. This prevented any future veneration of the idol's remains and symbolized that what is utterly destroyed cannot be recovered or restored.

Reformed theology applies this principle spiritually - believers must not merely moderate sinful behaviors but completely mortify (put to death) the deeds of the flesh. Halfway measures in dealing with sin prove inadequate; total destruction is required.

Historical Context

Moses' destruction of the golden calf resembles Josiah's later destruction of idolatrous objects during his reformation (2 Kings 23). Both demonstrate that true spiritual renewal requires radical removal of idolatry, not accommodation or gradual reform.

Exodus 32 records that Moses ground the calf to powder and made the Israelites drink it - forcing them to internalize and bear the consequences of their sin.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why was complete destruction of the idol necessary rather than merely removing it from sight?
2. How does this thoroughness apply to how believers should deal with sin in their lives?
3. What idols in our lives require this kind of radical, complete removal?
4. Why is partial reformation of sinful patterns insufficient for spiritual health?
5. How does the progressive destruction (burn, stamp, grind, cast away) picture progressive sanctification?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶת־	חַטַּאתְכֶּם	אֲשֶׁר	עָשִׂיתֶם	אֶת־	הָעֵגֶל	לִקְחֹתִי
H853	your sin	H834	which ye had made	H853	the calf	And I took
	H2403		H6213		H5695	H3947
וְאֲשֶׁר־	אֵת־	בָּאֵשׁ	וְאָכַתְתִּי	אֵת־	טָחֹן	הֵיטֵב
and burnt	H853	it with fire	and stamped	H853	it and ground	it very small
H8313		H784	H3807		H2912	H3190
אֲשֶׁר־	עַד	כִּי־	עָפָר־	וְאֲשַׁלֵּךְ־	אֶת־	עָפָר־
H5704	H834	even until it was as small	as dust	and I cast	H853	as dust
		H1854	H6083	H7993		H413
	הַנָּחַל	הַיֵּרֹד	מִן־	הַהָרִ:		
thereof into the brook		that descended out	H4480	of the mount		
H5158		H3381		H2022		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 32:20 (Creation): And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

Isaiah 31:7 (Creation): For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin.