

“Who’s on God’s Side?”
Exodus 32:25-29
(Preached at Trinity, May 10, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at this chapter dealing with the golden calf. It is one of the most familiar stories in the Bible. All of us have heard it before. We wag our heads and mutter, who could do such a thing? How could they be so foolish? Yet, we have all been guilty of idolatry.
2. As we’ve gone over the story we’ve seen how Aaron abandoned his duty as a leader and led Israel in the worship of this golden calf. He was the one chosen to be Israel’s high priest. What a terrible sin he committed. We’ve also seen how futile his efforts to absolve himself were. Our sins cannot be hidden from God.
God’s warning to the tribes of Reuben and Gad is a warning for all people:
Numbers 32:23 – “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.”
3. After Moses destroys the tablets of the Law and destroys the golden calf he gazed upon the children of Israel and saw them dancing without restraint before their idol.
Exodus 32:25 – “And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:)”
 - a. The word for “naked” in the KJV is the Hebrew word פָּרַע (para`) – it means to be loosened of restraint. They were dancing unrestrained – out of control. The word can also carries the sense of an uncovering, thus the KJV translation of nakedness. Whatever the meaning Israel had become ungoverned in their morals perhaps even committing sexual sin which was often consistent with idolatry.
 - b. It was scandalous behavior. These were the people that Jehovah God had delivered from Egypt with power and might. The people of God were now dancing and shouting around a dead idol. How the nations must have laughed at Israel and their God.
 - c. Israel was called out to represent God before the nations. Instead they made a mockery of their covenant blessing and opened themselves to the scorn of the world.
4. This is exactly the danger of our idolatry. When we behave just like the world, when we bow before their gods of materialism and pleasure it makes a mockery of the God we claim to love and serve. They world is always watching. They are always quick to declare us hypocrites.
This is one of the reasons God commands us to be separate and distinct in this world.
2 Corinthians 6:17-18 – “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,
¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”
5. Moses asks a most important question in **Verse 26**
Exodus 32:26 – “Who *is* on the LORD’S side?”

- A. After Moses destroyed the golden calf he went to the gate of the city.
1. The gate of a city was an important part of a city. It was the place where social, economic, and political business was conducted. It was the place where the elders sat and judgment was handed down.
 2. We read of it in **Proverbs 31**
Proverbs 31:23 – “Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.”
In other words, he was a ruler of the city who had great respect because of the Godliness of his wife.
- B. As Moses spoke from the gate of the city he shouted these defining words, “Who *is* on the LORD'S side?”
- C. The Tribe of Levi rose in allegiance before God.
1. This tribe would later be set apart for service to the Tabernacle – the priestly tribe.
Deuteronomy 10:8 – “At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.”
 2. At the command of God they donned their swords and began moving through the camp killing those who were guilty – presumably those who had been the instigators of the uprising.
 - a. There was no mercy – they killed brother, friend, and neighbor
 - b. About three thousand were killed. Then God destroyed the remaining ones with a plague.
6. This is an important question that must ring in our ears: “Who *is* on the LORD'S side?”
The picture is of two opposing sides. Which side are you on?
The NAS translates it “Whoever is for the LORD” – are you for Him or against Him?
7. Years later after Israel had entered Canaan and seized it from the inhabitants of the land Joshua would make a similar statement before Israel.
Joshua 24:14-15 – “Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. ¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”
8. Elijah would ask the question again years later as the people once again had fallen into idolatry. “Who *is* on the LORD'S side?”
1 Kings 18:21 – “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”
9. This is a question that goes forth to all men, but a particular question God’s people must ask of themselves.

- I. Who is zealous for the true worship of God?
- A. Worship is required of all men
1. All of creation owes homage to its creator
Psalms 95:6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
 2. All of creation *does* glorify the Creator
Psalms 19:1 – “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”
 3. Man is the only part of creation that doesn’t glorify God
Romans 1:21 – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
- B. Millions claim to worship God
1. Israel believed they were worshipping God – listen to Aaron
Exodus 32:5 – “And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD.”
 2. Jesus quoting from **Isaiah 29** condemned the hypocrites of His day
Matthew 15:8-9 – “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. ⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.”
 3. Jesus told the woman at the well the nature of true worship
John 4:23-24 – “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. ²⁴ God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.”
What does this mean?
- C. True worship demands spiritual life
1. Worship is an activity of the redeemed
 - a. This is why “seeker friendly” worship is irrational – a lost man doesn’t have the capacity to worship
 - b. Only a love for Christ will result in worship
 2. True worship demands a transformed heart
 3. Worship takes place when a person spiritually meets God.
James Montgomery Boice: “True worship occurs only when that part of man, his spirit, which is akin to the divine nature (for God is spirit), actually meets with God and finds itself praising him for his love, wisdom, beauty, truth, holiness, compassion, mercy, grace, power, and all his other attributes.”¹
 4. This isn’t the same thing as merely an emotional feeling. We can be stirred emotionally by the music or by a stirring sermon. We may be moved to tears or great joy and still not be worshipping.
Worship demand meeting Christ, coming to an awareness of His presence and praising Him for who He is. This cannot be done apart from doctrine.

¹Boice, J. M. (2005). *The Gospel of John : An expository commentary* (297). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.

5. True worship demands having both our heart drawn towards God in adoration and love as well as having our mind filled with the fullness of who He is.
 6. “in spirit and in truth.”
God can only be worshipped according to true doctrine
God will not allow us to worship Him according to our own imagination.
He will not allow us to consider Him as someone other than He is.
- D. This isn’t popular today
1. It wasn’t popular in Aaron’s day – they wanted gods like they had in Egypt
Exodus 32:1 – “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us”
 2. It isn’t popular today. We want our idols. We want to artificially create an atmosphere.
 3. Moses shouts, “Who *is* on the LORD’S side?”

II. Who is zealous for true service to God?

- A. God demands that we serve God alone with faithfulness and sincerity
1. Aaron was left in charge while Moses was gone. God was setting him aside as the high priest. He loved the praise of men more than the praise of God
 2. Aaron was not alone in this treasonous act before God. Could it be that many of the elders of Israel were also involved.
Remember Moses’ words before he ascended to the mountain:
Exodus 24:13-14 – “And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God. ¹⁴ And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur *are* with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.”
 3. Apparently many of the leaders of Israel led them away from God. Could this be those killed by the sword?
Exodus 32:27 – “And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.”
 4. Moses stands in the gate and shouts, “Who is on God’s side?”
- B. God demands faithful service
1. In the Parable of the Talents the master speaks to the faithful servants:
Matthew 25:21 – “His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”
To the unfaithful servant he speaks:
Matthew 25:26, 30 – “His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant . . . ³⁰ And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2. Most professing Christians today have gone AWOL. Few are involved in the labors of the Kingdom.
John 4:35-36 – “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. ³⁶ And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”
Matthew 9:37-38 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; ³⁸ Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.
3. “Who *is* on the LORD'S side?”

III. Who is zealous for the true separation for God?

- A. God called Israel to be holy
Exodus 19:5-6 – “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: ⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”
 1. They were to be separate. Much of the ceremonial law was designed to demonstrate their separation.
There were cleansing laws designed to show their separation from all that's defiled.
Circumcision marked them as separate from the nations.
The dietary laws further marked their difference from the nations.
 2. The first table of the Law stressed their duty to God
God commanded, “Thou shalt have no other god before Me.”
“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.”
 3. In making the golden calf and worshipping around it Israel had rejected their God
 4. Moses looked about and wondered if there were any left who were still separated unto God.
“Who *is* on the LORD'S side?”
- B. This sounds forth today loudly
Are there any who are on the Lord's side?
 1. Christians today are often intoxicated with the things of this world.
“Who *is* on the LORD'S side?”
 2. We can't be on the world's side and on Christ's side.
 3. Calvin: “If we love religion as it deserves, we must not halt between two sides. . . [we must] range ourselves every one under the banner of God.”

4. The words of Paul still sound forth loud and clear – SEPARATION!
2 Corinthians 6:14-18 – “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”
5. God has separated us unto Himself. We are holy. He commands that we be consecrated unto Him. He commands us to obey Him – completely, no matter what.

Conclusion:

1. In essence, the Gospel is a demand to make a choice. Whose side are you on?
 People will not turn to Christ because they are not interested in changing sides. They love their sin. They love their life of sin and are not willing to forsake it.
2. Turning to God’s side is a glorious life, an abundant life – true life.
 “Who *is* on the LORD'S side?”
 Are you?