

SB/JH25

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Morning
26th February 1922

Text Exodus 32 verse 26

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me.

The text is a very great challenge, in a very great circumstance, the circumstance of this, God had, had Moses with Him for forty days, and forty nights. He had given him the pattern of the tabernacle, the order of divine worship, the sacrifices, and ordinances. These were distinctly laid down, the law was given, and the people of God here, were to have their lives regulated, by what God had commanded Moses. They had just heard the law, had just had in their ears, the divine commandment. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing, that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath," (Exodus 20 verse 4). They had just professed themselves obedient, and said that, whatsoever the Lord said, they would do, and be obedient. It was easier to profess that, than to carry it out. The absence of Moses for forty days, was a test, and they could not stand it, at least a number of them. So they went to Aaron, and told him to make them a calf, and he sinned, gave way, had not strength to cleave to God, but yielded to their idolatrous wish.

They gave him their gold earrings, and he made a calf, and set it up, and the people, who had just heard God's voice, commanding them to have no graven image, nor the likeness of any thing, rose up early. They ate, they drank, they danced, and said "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (Exodus 32 verse 4). Moses was told, by the Lord, to go down, because the people had sinned a great sin. He went down, with the two tables of stone in his hands. His servant Joshua, was with him going down, and Joshua's unpracticed ear, heard singing in the camp, which was different, from that which was really heard. The experienced ear of Moses, said, it is not the voice of victory, nor it is not the cry of defeat, it is a song that I hear. He saw what had been done, and being done, his indignation waxed hot, and he cast the tables of stone out of his hand, and they were broken. He went to the people, and took the golden calf, ground it to powder, cast it into the water, and made them drink of the water. They drank the bitterness of idolatry, and were ashamed, these were the circumstances. Very great contrasts were in them, very striking, very solemn.

God's speaking to people, who professed obedience and faith, falling instantly, and resorting to idolatry. In these circumstances, one man inspired by God, and made strong, uttered this important word, and gave out this great challenge. "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." (Exodus 32 verse 26). This as we may rightly perceive it, may be a word suitable to us, to meditate upon, in this our evil day. Here was a religious nation, an unequivocal religious nation, newly brought out of captivity, blessed with a great leader, blessed still more with the presence of the great God, who had wrought wonders for them. Who had delivered them out of a furnace of iron, had brought them through the red sea, brought them to twelve wells of water, had given them to see something of His glory, and heard His thunder and saw His lightening. They had made a profession of allegiance and obedience, and now they were tested, and they failed.

Here are we in the wilderness of this world, a trying place, this wilderness is a test for our faith. Hunger tries people, thirst tries people, dangers try people. The absence of a distinct way, and defined track will try people, and the trial proves many to be wrong. Go to the carcasses which fell in the wilderness, which are there to be an example unto us, "lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4 verse 11). And I would, in the fear of God, as enabled, speak to you about this great matter. "Who is on the Lord's side," that is the first point, and it is an all embracing point. May we be helped to look at it, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." (John 4 verse 24). We are carnal, we love and seek tangible things, we are corrupted, and seek after things which appeal, to our corrupted nature, this is very solemn for us.

Now God is an Object, the only Object of worship. "Who is on the Lord's side," in this respect? believing and perceiving, Him, to be the only proper object of the worship of the soul. And that no tangible objects, can ever be objects of worship, for "No man has seen God at any time." (1 John 4 verse 12). Moses said to the Israelites, "for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." (Deuteronomy 4 verse 15). God is a Spirit, and the great difficulty that the people of God find, in this respect is, when faith is not in exercise, strong exercise, that there is no true conception, no powerful perception, of who this blessed God is, who is to be worshipped. The worship of God, in this respect is exclusive, it excludes every imagination, every conception, of which our fallen nature, is, as fallen capable of. The only object, not seen, not seeable by us, as we are men and women fallen, but seen and seeable, by faith only.

Worship is the soul's prostration, the soul's acknowledgement, the soul's adoration, the soul's trust and hope, going out, to an unseen object, except, as seen by the eye of faith. He who can, who is led and enabled, to worship this God, in spirit and truth, is a Christian, "Who is on the Lord's side." But this faith is tested, Christ is God, He will be worshiped, even when, as to the sense and comfort of His presence, there is a lack. John the baptist was in prison, and Christ was not with him in spirit, sent him no message, Christ would be worshiped then, and there He will be worshiped. God is in Him, and I beg of God, that we as a people, and individually, may be brought to this condition of heart, by the Holy Ghost, that we may find faith, going out to this God, in the face of all the blasphemies and irreverences, hardness and reasonings of our fallen nature. You will, as considering people, probably have many changes, when on your knees, or when your hearts would kneel, and bow before God, as to who it is you are praying to, who it is you are worshiping, as to whether you have any proof, that there is such a being. Whether you know Him, and what He is like, "what is His name, and what is His sons's name, if thou canst tell?" (Proverbs 30 verse 4).

There are many appeals to the infidelity, and to the incredulity of our nature, and the hardness and irreverence of our nature, and the devil is not slow, to urge them on, but God, as the Object of our worship, is alone. "I am God, and (beside Me) there is none else."(Isaiah 45 verse 22. Though "(there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we in Him."(1 Corinthians 8 verses 5 & 6). And when we have done with certain objects, that we love, such as public worship, reading the scripture, being in a way, associated by our own voices, to persons of the same mind, and are brought to the solemn position of a person alone, without the sustenance that I have just named. Then, O then, to find that there is an Object palpable to faith, not to human nature, as fallen, but to faith given, and that goes out from you, at that time, to that Object of worship, and adoration, a confidence, and you feel in your heart, a persuasion that you "have not following cunningly devised fables", (2 Peter 1 verse 16). But that God is, and is not far from you, and you not far from Him, and that His ear is open to your cry, open to your complaints, and that His eye is also upon you. O, it is a great thing, to be on the Lord's side, as the only proper Object of worship. Do not pass it by as unimportant, because this is the great end of religion When Paul saw the Athenians worship, they had erected an altar, with this strange inscription "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." (Acts 17 verse 23).

This was a solemn charge, brought against them, that they ignorantly worshiped an unknown God. There was no love to Him, how could there be? who can love an unknown object. They had no trust in Him, how could they trust in one whose power they were ignorant of, whose goodness and mercy, they were also ignorant of. This may be the means, in the hands of God, of causing us to perceive, the vital, the everlasting importance of worshiping a known God, and His promise, is very great here. "And I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord:"(Jeremiah 24 verse 7). And also "For they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 31 verse 34). This is a most merciful promise, for it tells us, that though we cannot claim to know God ourselves, by ourselves, He has condescended, to promise, to come down, to teach the knowledge of Himself, and "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."(Ezekiel 36 verse 26)., A heart to know Him, and to fear Him for ever.

This then is the first point, not a God you can imagine, not an Object you can picture in your own mind, which your intellect has framed, as being worthy. Not such an Object, but an Object which has mysteriously, wonderfully come, how you could not say, but came to you, and made Himself, in some measure, and some manner known to you. So that you, at that moment, could no more doubt that He is the true and living God, than you could doubt your own being. To Him as thus made known, the worship of your heart goes. If I have been able to make this point clear to you, and the Lord should bless it, I shall not have spoken in vain. I want to know this God for myself, I have felt that I have known Him, felt Him near and worshiped Him, with no image in my mind. nothing before my mind that I could create, but a great incomprehensible, wonderful glorious Being, whose name is Jehovah. Whose name is also the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second point I would direct your attention to, is this, "Who is on the Lord's side" as He is an Object of love. It is solemnly declared in the scripture "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Corinthians 16 verse 22).(let him be accursed) O sinner, what a solemn word, If your heart has never glowed with love to Christ, if you have never gone out to Him, in the secret affections of your soul, if you have never felt His "name as ointment poured forth," (Song of Solomon 1 verse 3) into your troubled heart. But, if you have just lived, and are living in ignorance, and lack of love, that word in, the terribleness of it, as far as your present state is concerned, belonging to you, "let him be Anathema Maranatha", let him be accursed.

On the other hand, it is written, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." (Ephesians 6 verse 24). To love Christ is to worship Him:

Love all defects supplies, (Gadsby's 792 verse 8)

To love Christ will make you go out to Him, in the ardour of your affections, and you will find in measure, your love is straight with that word, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12 verse 34). Christ and Him crucified, Christ in whom God is the Object of your love, it is a great thing, for a saint to sing,

Jesus, I love Thy charming name;
Tis music to my ears; (Gadsby's 138 verse 1)

Bless God, that some of us love His name, and have felt love to His name, warming our hearts. There is that in Him, to draw out love, there is that in Him, which will make you love Him, if you know Him. There is suitableness in Him to a bad case, He is a Saviour of sinners, He is the intercessor for dumb people, He is the life of the dead, and the light of the blind. He is the righteousness of the unjust, He is the holiness of the polluted people, O what a friend is Christ. Here is all a God can give, all a sinner can need. When God's gift and your need meet, then the person in whom they meet, will be loved. You could not help loving Christ, as seeing Him, who to reason is invisible, but to faith visible. "While we look not on the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen:"(2 Corinthians 4 verse 18).

Are you on His side, as to love? then I will say this is exclusive, it excludes images, crosses, priests, everything and everybody, that would come in between, or share the worship and love, with Him. You will say,

None but Jesus! (Gadsby's 918 verse 3)

Only Christ, only this one Object, do I seek to know, to love and to follow, all men are as nothing compared to Him. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10 verse 37). "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, (house or land,) and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14 verse 26). He is not worthy of Me, and faith will prove, these exclusive sayings, yes it will prove them, I say. Well, "who is on the Lord's side." Where is the lover of Jesus Christ, where is the sinner, who can protest to Almighty God?

I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord from Thee. (Gadsby's 1105 verse 1)

Ruth's love to Naomi, made her cleave to Naomi, and to say, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee:" (Ruth 1 verse 16). Do you love Christ, whom you have never seen? and can you say to Him, Do not put me off, do not leave me, do not spurn me? I am a sinner. I am vile, I am a dog, I am worthless, I am utterly corrupted, but have mercy on me. Heal my soul, bless and save me. Evidently, in the scripture, love to Christ is a great thing, you will be with Him, not against Him. "For he that is not against us is (for us) on our part." (Luke 9 verse 40). "Then came the spirit upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse:" (1 Chronicles 12 verse 18).

Did we ever see this Lord Jesus Christ? King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and go to Him with our cases, our wars, our difficulties, our weakness, our enemies, and say humbly, "Thine we would be Lord Jesus, and on thy side, Thou King of Kings, Thou Son of God? Take, O take us as we are, rule in us, rule over us, and for us, and subject us entirely to Thyself, and bind us to Thy blessed cross. You may say, we have plenty of enmity, have we a little love?

Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is cold and faint; (Gadsby's 968 verse 6)

But if you have a little love, bless God for it, He will make it grow.

"Who is on the Lord's side" in respect of prayer? "O Baal, hear us" was the cry of four hundred and fifty deluded prophets from morning till evening, and they got no answer. "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel" was the simple and humble petition of Elijah. "And the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." "Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the sacrifice". (1 Kings 17 verses 24 - 39). Well, did you ever pray? you say I do not know, did you ever get an answer? did you ever feel broken hearted at the throne of grace? Did energy, the energy of faith, ever move you to feel, and to say, "I will not let Thee go." (Genesis 32 verse 26). Did you ever feel you could plead an evil case, and take it to the Lord, follow it up, not let it alone, nor let Him alone? Lord I want a deal of saving, save me, O save me from myself, from my heart, from my hypocrisy, from my wickedness, from all the hypocritical things that I have in my nature.

I want saving from hardness, and ingratitude, and from my innumerable sins. Save me by Thy blood, and by Thy Spirit, and by Thy righteousness, And did you ever go with those petitions again and again? Has it been, one may say, to some, has it not been the prayer of years, not fully answered, but occasionally, hints of answers, even of Christ's mercy? Touches as you have hoped, of His Spirit, attractions of His Person, some inclining of His word to help you. It is a great thing to be a praying sinner, and a man on Christ's side, going to His heavenly throne with cases, with prayers, with children, with families, with business, with weakness, and sick bodies, with many lame things, and worst of all, with dreadful sins. Going and applying to the throne of grace, with prayers, arguments, and beseechings. Such people, will find themselves, sooner or later, constrained to say, in reply to this word, "who is on the Lord's side." Lord we are. Yes, blessed be God, there is such a thing, as a praying person, getting answers, and finding comfort. Oh sinner.

Urge thy claim through all unfitness; (Gadsby's 484 verse 5)

"Who is on the Lord's side" in respect of trust? Trust has a ground, it must have, trust is not a fancy, it is not a blind thing, trust flows from knowledge. If you, according to your judgement, and it may, be the trial of years, can say of a person, I can trust him, I have had proof of it, when he speaks, I know he speaks the truth, I can trust that character. Well that is a great thing, to trust, you see, proceeds from knowledge. Who can trust an unknown Christ? Nobody. People may think they do, but they do not, they cannot, but if you have, by faith, seen His character, His person, His priesthood, His sacrifice, His sufficiency, His suitability to you, then one certain result has been, you have rolled yourself, rolled your case on Him. What a great thing this is, the trust of a sinner thus taught, is his trust in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. Trust in the faithful word of Christ, trust in the goodness of Christ, in the fulness of Christ, it is great for us to trust in Christ. Now here are points for us to meditate upon, as we may be helped. "Who is on the Lord's side." this will be a point, sooner or later, of more felt importance, than it may be now, with some. "They that are with Him (the Lamb) are called, and chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17 verse 14). There are two sorts of tests, to which we may be brought, with respect to our ground to hope in, and trust upon the Lord of life and glory. One is an inward test, what Christ is, absent, as to sense and feeling, when His light does not shine, and when contrarily, the power of indwelling sin, asserts itself, some assaults are made, banks are cast up against the city, and the enemy is there ready to destroy, and Christ does not come to help. The captain is absent, and the soldier fails.

The guide is absent, and the pilgrim is weary, and feels he must lose his way. It is a solemn position to be in, you are fighting for your life. You are a pilgrim to heaven, as you hope, now if the captain be not with you, if the guide be not with you, what are you to do? What are poor sinners to do, if there captain is away? Well I said before, I will say it again, Christ will be trusted when He is absent. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14 verse 31). When this inward trial come, seek:

To trust Him endeavour; the work is His own;
and (Gadsby's 804 verse 2)
These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free; (Gadsby' 295 verse 7)

To wean from self confidence, to show what self can do, when it is left, all it can do is to doubt, misgive and feel more wretched, and we know this as we are taught of God. The enemy takes advantage of Christ's absence, yea he is the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them night and day, before God. He accused the upright man of hypocrisy, he accused Job to Almighty God saying, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou has blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." (Job 1 verses 8 - 11). And if God leaves you to some of his accusations, you will find yourself, sorely put to it.

Then to maintain the battle (Gadsby's 235 verse 3)

Then to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13 verse 15). Then to believe that, though now your eye sees no God, that Christ will come again, and that you will see Him, and believe He is yours. Oh,

Then to maintain the battle
With soldier-like behaviour;
To keep the field, and never yield,
But firmly eye the Saviour;

Canst thou not, poor soul perceive, this is now thy work of faith, this is that faith that overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil. "Who is on the Lord's side" in this fight of faith? Who is on the Lord's side?" They that are with the Lamb, they that cleave to the cross, they that say, Lord in life and in death, I desire to be found in Thee, and to be following Thee.

They that are with the lamb are called to Him, are chosen in Him, and are faithful, through the faith of the operation of God. And there may be some outward trials, the enemy is busy, his power is great. Arminianism may gain power, how far the world may rise, up against the saints of the Most High, is not known. I do not pretend, to have any special understanding in these things, portents of the times, are such, as to make it almost impossible, for us not to consider times, in the event of such and such trials, as threaten what will become of you that are younger. Who is your trust? where is your confidence? "Who is on the Lord's side."

"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:"(and if you want the most company, you will have it there) "Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."(Matthew 7 verses 13 & 14). If you seek much company, you will not find it in this way, but they that are with the Lamb, why? He goes before them, and shows them His lovely face, and they believe in His omnipotence, and His infinite wisdom, and their hearts cleave to Him, and they follow Him. And so they would go with Him, not always, as Bunyan speaks, in silver slippers, but in the rough and thorny path of tribulation. That difficult road, that makes it, all but impossible, sometimes to get along, but they would follow Him through. "Who is on the Lord's side."

If you have an experimental religion, you must expect to be opposed. You will find opposition in your own nature, and you may find opposition in providence also. There will come great opposition in cleaving to Christ by pure and living faith, and this is no easy matter, as every child of God, will find sooner or later. "Let him come unto me," who is on the Lord's side, said Moses, who was the representative of the Almighty, whilst the idolaters were the children of the wicked one. On the one hand was the great God, who had recently spoken to them, on the other hand was this golden calf, which appealed to the idolatrous Israelites, who "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play,"(verse 6) and dance. And said "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."(verse 4). "And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him."(Moses). Their head Aaron, had proved himself feeble and false, but they gathered themselves to Moses. And when it pleases God, to appear and show Himself, to His poor children, they have to leave all the idolatry of their nature, and all those things, that lead them astray, and follow Him, cleave to Him with purpose of heart.

Now I shall not pursue this point further, this morning, but would seek grace for you, to look at the matter for yourselves. And beg of God to enable you to look at this solemn appeal, this great challenge, "Who is on the Lord's side." As knowing God, so as to cleave to Him in Christ, to follow Him, and love Him with the Holy Ghost, to follow none but that Spirit which can make you "wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3 verse 15) and therefore though His name be cast out, though the precious death of Christ be discounted, though God be represented as images, still be able to say, my soul cleaves to this blessed Trinity. The only hope I have is there, the only trust I have is there, the only end of my faith is there. May the Lord make it out to us, whatever doubts and fears we have, may He bring the light, of that one glorious person, who seen by faith once, wins the affections, the loyalty and the trust of all to whom He is revealed.

Amen