

Sermon Manuscript: Exodus 32:15-35

Intro – reminder that sermon notes can be found on the app!!

Recap from last week.

Idolatrous Heart

- Their idolatrous heart translated into a life which exalted self-gratification over the plans and purposes of God.
- When the pursuit of something or someone compromises our faithfulness to His word and His will then we are engaging in idolatry, much like the Israelites did.

Intercessors Heart

- While the people exchanged God's glory for a lesser thing, Moses pursued God's glory as he interceded for the people.
- At the heart of intercession is not a change of circumstance, it is the glory of God.

This morning we are going to look at two more conditions of the heart that are seen in Exodus 32, both of which are only possible as a result of God's work in the life of His people.

****Prayer****

Body

In this part of the chapter, we see Moses leave the mountain and go down to the people. Up to this point he is only aware of what's happening with the people by what God had told him. Which of course was fully accurate, but it's one thing to hear about something, its completely different to experience it.¹ Especially when talking about something as sensory as the wild party happening around the idol. When he gets to the bottom of the mountain and comes near the camp Scripture says this about his reaction... *his anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.* He then turns his attention to Aaron, his brother. He asks him, *"What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?"* To which Aaron replied *"Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. 23 For they said to me, 'Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' 24 So I said to them, 'Let any who have gold take it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."* Does this response sound familiar? It is remarkably similar to the response Adam gave when confronted with his sin in that he tried to shift the blame away from himself. And while this is a side point for our time today, it bears mentioning that this is a constant temptation for us today. We think so highly of ourselves and are so intent on portraying a spotless, "church person" image to those

¹ World Series Game

around us that when we are caught in sin, we try to shift the blame to someone or something else.

But then we get to verses 25-29 which is where our third heart condition comes into play. It says this...

25 And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies), 26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. 27 And he said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.'" 28 And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell.

In verse 26 we see Moses ask a very important question... *who is on the Lord's side?* Now remember,

- When the people left Egypt a couple months ago everyone was on the Lord's side.
- When they crossed the Red Sea and saw the Egyptian army be consumed by the water, everyone was on the Lord's side.
- When they gathered together at the base of Mt. Sinai and God revealed Himself to them through thunder and lightning, smoke and thick darkness, everyone was on the Lord's side. They were terrified, but they were on His side.
- When they were given the 10 Commandments, everyone was on the Lord's side. Chapter 24 vs. 3 says *Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lords and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "all the words that the Lords has spoken we will do."*

Over the past few months since the Exodus from Egypt the people had been on God's side. Even though they grumbled and complained on numerous occasions against Moses and against God, they ultimately came back to the Lord. But here we have a completely different situation. **No one here doubts God's existence, whether or not He is real, or His presence, whether or not He is with them in the wilderness. They doubt His goodness; whether or not He is providing what is best for them. Whether or not He is the best option for them.** And is that not where many of our doubts come from? We wonder not if God is real or even if He is present, but if He is good.² Moses asks the people a question and I would pose it to us today, *who is on the Lord's side?* The response is sobering, only one of the 12 tribes indicated they were on the Lords side, the sons of Levi. 1 in 12. These individuals demonstrated what is the first blank under part 2, a **committed heart**. We don't know if they participated in the idolatry, but whether they did or didn't at this point they are rejecting that sin and committing themselves to the Lord. They wanted more than to just be counted as part of God's people, they wanted to be on God's side. They wanted to reject the idolatry and the immorality that was all around them and embrace God's will for them as His people. 1 in 12. They were in the minority. If you assume the tribes were evenly split (which they probably were not) that means roughly 8% of the people answered yes to Moses' question.

² We believe He created all things, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We believe in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. We even believe the Scripture is God's word and is true in all things. But when we look around and see all the evil, all the bad things happening to good people, all the bad things happening to us, we are tempted to doubt whether God is truly good.

We have in this room approximately 300 chairs. There are probably around 200 people in the room. 8% of 200 is 16 people. These are very rough estimations, but it should help us see the point. Out of all the people who would have identified themselves as God's people, only 8% stood up and committed to being on God's side. So I would ask us again, who is on the Lord's side? Or, to make it a bit more personal, are you on the Lord's side?³ It's no secret that being on the Lord's side isn't a popular place to be. It's not an easy place to be. We may have decisions to make and things to do that may cause us to be humiliated, shamed, hurt, mocked, or even vilified by those around us. Jesus knew this. In John 15 as He talks with His disciples, He acknowledges the hatred they were feeling from the world. He still knows this. He is still Immanuel and as we talked about last week, He is still interceding for us, that God the Father would be glorified. **No matter the sin around us, no matter the sin we ourselves have engaged in, no matter the depravity of our culture or the brokenness of our world, you and I and everyone else must answer this question.** Who is on the Lord's side? The Levites that answered yes were then given an extremely tough job... they were to be the means of executing punishment on the people for their sin. Remember, there were still consequences for Israel's idolatry. Though they received grace from the Lord and were not consumed, their actions required a response, and so the Lord used those who were publicly committed to Him to execute His justice. I want to make a brief note about vs 27-28; it may seem like God's ask of the Levites was extreme... go throughout the camp kill brother, companion, and neighbor. This is not however quite as heartless as it sounds. It is not a blanket test of the Levites that they kill everyone close to them. It is much more similar in tone to Jesus' statement that those who do not hate father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children are not worthy of being His disciple. Is it a blanket statement to hate one's family? Not at all. **Rather it is a statement used to communicate the need for a radical commitment to Christ above all else.** This requirement of the Levites is very similar. They are not to let anything keep them from executing justice on those who had rebelled against the Lord, even family ties.⁴ Now here's the deal... that is not our job. It would be easy to take this passage and use it to support some idea of executing justice on God's enemies. But that's not our job, it's Gods. That's a whole other sermon, but our job is to stand firm in our position as children of God and point everyone around us to the goodness and graciousness of our God.

Continuing with verses 30-35...

30 The next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." 31 So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written." 33 But the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book. 34 But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them." 35 Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.

³ What exactly does that mean? See John 14:15, 15:8.

If you love me keep my commandments...

by this my father is glorified that you bear much fruit...

⁴ Only 3k were actually killed.

Moses here makes an amazing offer.

He has already demonstrated an intercessors heart as we looked at last week. He has come before God on behalf of the people ultimately desiring that in whatever happens God would be most glorified. But now he is demonstrating a **sacrificial heart**. It would have been easy for him to accept the Lords first offer... to be the one guy left standing and have an entire people come from his family line. Think about it; you are THE ONE PERSON chosen by God to be His people. We all want this on some level. We want to feel special, unique, better than those around us. I think about my 7/8 year old baseball team from this past season. At the beginning of practice, I would have them run to the scoreboard and back to where we were at. Each day we did this I would choose a leader; the rest of the team had to keep up but not pass the leader. You would have thought I was handing out ice cream for life. Everyone wanted to be chosen as the leader. Or I think about my kids at home. Each time we pray for a meal they are ALL yelling out "can I pray? I want to pray. Me pray." At this age they don't care so much about the actual praying, but they want to be the one chosen to pray. Moses had this opportunity, and he didn't even have to ask for it. But instead of his baseball coach choosing him to lead the team to the scoreboard and back God was choosing Him to be the one who started again His people. But not only does he pass on that offer, he makes a counteroffer... please forgive their sin, but if not, blot out my name from your book that they may be forgiven. He understands that the people are stubborn and rebellious, as God described in vs. 9. He knows that they have committed a terrible sin and deserve whatever punishment God chooses to hand out. But now his request is a little different. Before he had come down from the mountain and seen the sin for himself, he was asking that God stay true to Himself; that His name, character, and attributes would be held in high regard among both the Israelites and the surrounding nations. Forgiveness though probably wasn't one of the attributes at the top of his mind. At this point however, forgiveness is without a doubt his priority. He says to the people *"you have sinned a great sin."* And then to the Lord, *"Alas, this people has sinned a great sin."* He recognizes the severity of the sin. And then the ultimate request, *"if you will, forgive their sin."* **The word forgive here describes a lifting up of something.** It is as if the people are weighted down by the burden of sin, unable to rid themselves of the burden on their own. Moses is making a huge request. That the weight and burden of the people's sin be removed from them. But if not, he is willing to take it one step further. He is willing to offer up the most precious thing he has, his life for the life of the people. It is not agreed on among scholars what exactly Moses is offering up by his use of the phrase *"blot me out of your book"* ... his physical life or his eternal life, but it really doesn't matter. Moses was willing to trade his life for the life of the people. But while this is a noble offer, one that demonstrates a remarkable love for the people, God cannot accept this offer. Why? Because like the people, Moses was a sinner. Even though he was a man who had arguably the most intimate relationship with God of anyone throughout all of Scripture, he still fell short of the standard God had set. We read of his own sin and rebellion against God, we see his disobedience which ultimately kept him out of the promised land. He too was a sinner who deserved no more special treatment than the people who had worshipped the golden calf. And as such, his sacrifice would not be sufficient to atone for the sins of the people. Which makes it that much more amazing when a man comes and is able to make that sacrifice, Jesus. As the perfect, atoning sacrifice Jesus took Moses' offer and went to the next level. He did not just ask for the people's forgiveness, He actually took the

burden of sin and placed it on Himself. The sin didn't just disappear, it was given to Jesus, the one who had never sinned.

Closing – have praise team come up

The praise team is going to come on up and we are going to respond to God's word this morning. Over the past two weeks we have gone through all of Exodus 32 and have seen how God is still working in, through, and on behalf of His people even in their failure. Not only that but He has included this in His word so that according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 you and I today can learn from the people's failure and not desire evil as they did. But should we fall as did the Israelites, listen to this wonderful promise from 1 John 2...

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ³And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

We know that in Christ was a heart that was **never** stained with idolatry, a heart that **even now** intercedes for his people, a heart that was **fully** committed to the work of his father, and a heart that made the **ultimate** sacrifice so that you and I would not have to suffer the punishment **we** deserved for **our** idolatry.

We are not so different from the Israelites. But instead of a broken mediator we have a perfect mediator. One who has already taken the punishment we deserve for our sin and who now stands between us and a good father, advocating on our behalf.

Closing Song: Good, Good Father

Call to Worship: Psalm 25:1-7

Worship Set: (1) Living in the Overflow (2) How Great Thou Art (3) He Will Hold Me Fast

Communion: John 10:10-11

Benediction: Hebrews 12:1-2 NLT

Worship Guide Outline
God Shapes Us Through Failure
Exodus 32

Part 1

An Idolatrous Heart (1-6)

An Intercessors Heart (7-14)

Part 2

A Committed Heart (15-29)

A Sacrificial Heart (30-35)

Friday Email Paragraph

In part two of our sermon God Shapes Us Through Failure in Exodus 32, we will look at a very important question that Moses asks the people, one that is extremely relevant for us today. It is a question of commitment; who is on the Lord's side? The people of Israel had just committed their most egregious act of rebellion to date in the construction and worship of the golden calf, and they now have this very important question to answer. Just as their answer was important then, so too is our answer today. Are you on the Lord's side?