

# The Lord's Side

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Preacher: Chad Bennett

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Amen. Thank you. You may be seated. Good morning. Please open your Bibles to Exodus 32.

Exodus 32. Today we're looking at verses 19 through 35. And we heard read earlier 1 through I think was it 12 or 14.

So most of the chapter we're going to read today. But we're starting in Exodus 32 beginning in verse 19. And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot.

And he threw the tablets out of his hand 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.

And Moses said to Aaron, What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my Lord burn hot.

[ 1 : 2 6 ]     You know the people that they are set on evil. 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.

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. And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose, for Aaron had let them break loose to the derision of their enemies, 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. And he said to them, Thus says the Lord, God of Israel, Put your swords 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.

And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about 3,000 men of the people fell. And Moses said, Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.

The next day Moses said to the people, You have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up to the Lord. Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. So Moses returned to the Lord and said, Alas, this people has sinned a great sin.

[ 3 : 0 0 ]     They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin, but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written. But the Lord said to Moses, Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.

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.

Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, Father, we again ask for your spirit to work among us in the preaching of the word.

Give us attentive hearts to your word. Lord, help us understand this in light of the gospel, in light of the work of Christ, in whose name we pray these things. Amen.

As we go on through this chapter, we're really coming to the end. I think this is the third message in this chapter. But as we come to the end of chapter 32, this whole chapter is kind of centered around the idea of a mediator.

[ 4 : 09 ] The golden calf is probably the thing we remember the most. But I think the point of the chapter is to make us look to Moses as the stand between, the mediator of God's people.

It focuses upon Moses' role. And I want to look at a few things today. First, I want to look at the destruction of the idol. What did Moses do in destroying the idol?

Well, we see that as soon as he came down and he saw what they were doing, Moses took action. There's no delay. He doesn't allow himself to be there amongst them in their sin without addressing it.

There's no delay for him in dealing with the sin. In fact, the first step that Moses takes is to break the tablets. He's just been given by God. God's given the Ten Commandments, two copies of it, for them to store in the tabernacle.

God's given it to him. He makes it down the mountain carrying these tablets of stone. He sees what they're doing. He throws it down and breaks them. And he even talks about his anger burning hot. But I want you to understand as well that there's no rebuke from God for what he did.

[ 5 : 22 ] Often when I've read this, I think, God's probably frustrated with Moses. Now he's got to make another set. Look, God's not troubled by making tablets of stone. There's no work for God to do.

There's no rebuke from God upon Moses. Moses. We might say this is one of the few examples in God's word of a person having righteous anger.

They are upset with God's people. And what Moses does is actually quite symbolic. God's people have broken the covenant. At this point, the covenant materialized or there before them is the Ten Commandments.

So as he brings the Ten Commandments down that they promised that they would obey, and they've already broken, he breaks the Ten Commandments. Again, like a visual representation of what you've done. You've broken God's covenant.

You've broken these commandments, and therefore, the tablets are broken. And so the broken tablets symbolize the breaking of God's covenant. Think back, Exodus 24, verses 3 through 7.

[ 6 : 29 ] Remember, we were talking about this last week, that there's a continuation of the narrative from chapter 24 picking up here in chapter 32. And so what happened before Moses went up on the mountain?

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules, and all the people answered with one voice and said, All the words that the Lord has spoken, we will do.

And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, All that the Lord has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient.

And Moses is gone 40 days, and they've already broken it. And he comes back down, and he throws down really the symbolism of the covenant.

This ought to remind us as well, James 2.10 tells us that, For whoever keeps the whole law, but fails in one point, has become guilty of it all.

[ 7 : 31 ] And so we may look at it, and there's probably some ways that we can come up with at least three commandments that they broke in worshiping the idol.

But breaking any of the commandments is to break covenant with God, and so become guilty of all of it. So remember, for us, if we were to depend upon our own righteousness, our own goodness, how good do we have to be?

Well, if we break one of God's law, we're guilty of breaking all of God's law. I've broken one.

Remember when we went through the Ten Commandments? I hope that no one left our study of the Ten Commandments thinking, Well, I've kept those. We were all reminded that we all have broken God's commandments, and breaking any of them is to break them all, and therefore be unworthy of salvation, worthy really only of God's judgment.

And so we see the destruction of the idol. And when we look at the destruction of the idol, what we see is it's almost like an opposite of creation.

[ 8 : 46 ] When it was made, we see how it was made. It was in parts. It was given to Aaron, who put it into the fire. He brings it out. He uses an engraving tool to shape it into and make it into this bull.

And now we see really the opposite happening in verse 20. He took the calf that they had made, and he burned it with fire, and he ground it to powder, probably with some type of tool, and he scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

Deuteronomy 9.21, Moses gives an account of what he did. He said, Then I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust.

And I threw the dust into the brook that ran down from the mountain. And, of course, we see from this that they then must have drank from that brook. Now, that seems, I don't know if you got, that seems pretty strange to me.

They had to drink the idol, little pieces of gold going through the intestinal system. I don't know. It's kind of weird. But I think there's a symbolism in this as well, that they're drinking the bitterness of their own sin.

[ 9 : 54 ] They're forced to taste what they've done and know that what they did was wrong. One commentator said they swallowed their own ungodliness. And then after the destruction of the idol, which I may have said last week, but let me say again, even the destruction of the idol is a meditorial work.

Moses is standing in as the mediator of God's people. He's getting rid of the objects of their worship. It is a good thing for him to do. Later on, we'll see in the history of Judah that the good kings follow after bad kings and they destroy the idols.

They destroy the places, the altars, where people would go to worship false gods. Moses is standing in their place and saying, be done with this. There's also a realization that no one is really leading God's people.

We talked about last week how there's this judgment upon Aaron, that Aaron was held responsible because he is not only the spiritual leader of God's people, he's also standing in for Moses as almost a political leader while Moses is up on top of the mountain.

And so he was the one to make sure nothing happened. And so Moses comes down and what does he say? What have these people done to you that you brought this great sin upon them? There's no spiritual leadership going on.

[ 11 : 21 ] Aaron has allowed them to build the idol. He's actually made the idol for them when they requested it. It talks about them breaking loose, and we talked about that a couple weeks ago, that that probably has some implications of some type of worship of fertility gods and something of that sinful nature.

And it says when Moses saw that they had broken loose because Aaron allowed them to break loose. So apparently he had allowed them to partake in these rituals that would have been very displeasing to God.

So there's no one standing there to hold God's people accountable for their sin, to point to them and say, this is what you've done and it's wrong before God. And we might wonder who it was that was involved in this sin, especially if you're going to see in a minute about the Levites.

But listen to verse 3 of our chapter. So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. There seems to be an implication throughout the chapter that there's this unified response that they're all willing to partake of this.

They're all involved in this worship of this idol. And so when Moses comes down, he makes a plea and he asks who's on the Lord's side. He's not asking who hasn't done this, who hasn't been a part of this.

[ 12 : 41 ] I think he's asking who's repenting of this now, who sees that what they have done is wrong, who wants to turn away from that and now do what is right. Verse 26 of our chapter gives us the account of this.

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.

Now when you think of this, there's 12 tribes. And of the 12 tribes, we had one tribe who responded. 8.5% off the top of my head, something like that.

Right? A very small percentage of God's people responded who are willing to stand with God and with Moses. It's also Moses' tribe. So there may be even a little bit of sway of we stand with Moses.

As much as it is they're standing with God. Now if we thought the swelling of the gold is strange, this probably also seems pretty strange. Who is on the Lord's side?

[ 13 : 49 ] The Levites come to him and he tells the Levites to put on their swords and go around the camp and kill their brothers, their sons. This is probably speaking more of your brothers and sons in terms of you're all one family in Israel.

But nonetheless, they go about, they do what they said, and they kill 3,000 people that day. 3,000 people works out to be about half of 1% of the men who were in Israel at that time based on the census that we've seen.

So it's not as though they went around killing everybody. There had to be some selectiveness to who it is that they killed. We're not given the details, but apparently it would seem that it's probably those that are in the midst of the rivalry, those who are continuing to worship this false god who have not stopped, even though Moses has come down from the mountain and basically called them out for this.

And so we might think of this as, and I'm not trying to be pragmatic, I know this probably isn't the best way, but God's commanded it. We've seen that God is the one who gave the command. Verse 27. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, put your sword to your side.

So God's the one who gives the command. But we could say a few deaths for the purpose of saving many. This is an example to Israel.

[ 15 : 18 ] This is what your sin has brought upon you. The result of sin, the wages of sin is death. And you're seeing this before your eyes. And the response ought to be, well, I'm not going to do that.

Never having that happen again. And if you're familiar with Israel's history, you know that that didn't quite work. But some have died, and many have been preserved.

I went back and read from chapter 24 about that covenant, and we saw that half the blood was thrown in the altar. What happened to the other half of the blood? Do you remember when they read the covenant? They promised they would do it, and Moses takes it, and he throws the blood on the people.

Again, kind of strange for us. But there's a symbolism that, may what happened to this sacrifice happen to me if I break your covenant. So even, it's easy for us today to judge by maybe today's standards and say, what kind of God says kill his own people?

But understand as well that they had pledged to obey God, and that they would die if they disobey. And yet, God doesn't kill them all.

[16:33] Now, before you get any great ideas, that's not what we do in the church today. Okay? Some of you are probably sneaking out right now, thinking, oops, I hope he doesn't have a sword on right now.

In the church today, I think the equivalent would be church discipline. When you have someone who's claiming to be a part of God's people, but who's continuing to live in unrepentant sin, God's called us to set them apart from his people, to acknowledge that they're walking in a way that would symbolize that they're not truly believers at all, and therefore cannot be a part of God's people.

This is more radical, but we see there's a correlation, even in terms of church discipline. And there's a call for the Levites, or for really all God's people, to separate themselves from the sin.

Who's on the Lord's side? And the implication is, if you're not on the Lord's side, whose side are you on? Satan's side? The side of the gods, of the Egyptians that have been symbolized in this bull?

The side of polytheism? Look at verse 29 of our text. And Moses said, Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.

[17:58] This ordination we talked about before when Aaron and his sons were ordained to the office of the priesthood, as far as we have record, this is the first time that we see any reference to the Levites being set apart, being ordained for this work.

You know later on the Levites will be those who serve in the tabernacle and then the temple. Well, all of that seems to be a result of this moment right here. They stood on the Lord's side, and God set them apart.

He ordained them for his service. You alone, of all the people, will be those who serve me. I think of what that required, that the Levites had to go about killing perhaps some who really were literal brothers, who were sons.

That's not how we operate again in the covenant of grace, but in Matthew 10, 37-38, you may remember Jesus says, whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Is this not a display of that?

[19:19] Who's on the Lord's side? Who loves God more than brother and family? Who will stand against your family even and call sin, sin? Or again, another teaching of Jesus where Jesus says, you cannot serve two masters.

You're going to obey one and disobey the other. You're going to worship one and not the other. You can't serve two masters. And so there's this call amongst Israel. Who's on the Lord's side? Who among you is still worshiping God, Yahweh, and who among you has turned to these gods who you claim have rescued you, saved you from Egypt?

And so this is the action Moses has taken. He's destroyed the idol. He's called God's people to him. It's a small percentage of the people.

And they go around and kill even a smaller percentage of God's people. And then we see Moses. Verse 30.

The next day Moses said to the people, you have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to the Lord perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. So Moses returned to the Lord and said, alas, these people have sinned a great sin.

[ 20 : 34 ] They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now if you will forgive their sin, but if not, please block me out of your book that you have written. You realize the offer that Moses is making.

If you just read verse 32, it might not be clear. He may be saying something along the lines of, if you're going to kill your people, kill me with them. Block me out of the book.

But verse 30 gives us insight into that. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. What is atonement for sin?

He's saying perhaps I can pay the price for your sin. Perhaps I can offer to God something that he will say, okay, then they're forgiven. And he begins with, basically, look, I mean, it's not here.

He says, but now if you will forgive their sin, now, in light of what's happened, will you forgive their sin? Is what Moses is saying. And what's happened? We killed those who were still participating in that.

[ 21 : 36 ] We destroyed the idol. It's gone. The people drank it. They tasted the bitterness of their own sin. They drank their own ungodliness. Will you please forgive them? And so, it's almost as though, are these actions enough to earn forgiveness?

And if you will not, I'm going to take it a step further, and I'm going to offer you an atoning sacrifice. Block me out of your book. I think I touched a little bit on the blotting out of the book.

When I was studying it this week, I think there were at least eight references in the New Testament to blotting out of your book. And it can mean, in terms of a book of existence, I mean, he may be saying, let me die, but we also have examples, like in the book of Revelation, that there's the book of life in which are the names of those whom God has saved.

He may be saying, take away my salvation. Damn me to hell that they could be saved. Now, as radical as that may seem, that's almost identical to what Paul says in Romans, isn't it?

You remember he says, I could wish my own self a curse for the sake of my people, Israel. Paul's saying, I could wish myself to have no salvation if I would know God would save his people.

[ 22 : 57 ] He's stepping in in a role very similar to Moses, but that's what Moses is saying. Can one man die in the place of all your people? What he's really getting at is God's plan of salvation.

It's exactly what God has planned. It's what we've been looking for ever since the fall. God promises in Genesis 3.15 he will send a seed from the woman who will crush the head of the seed of the serpent.

You may remember we've looked to this son, but I believe that Adam and Eve looked to their son and thought, is this the one? And even Seth, again, is this the one who's going to be that sacrifice?

And ever since then they were looking for this Messiah, this one who will die for the sake of God's people. And I don't know that Moses has that specifically in mind. There's part of me that thinks he has to have some concept of this salvation and he's looking to the Messiah for salvation.

But is Moses wondering, is this man who's been raised up as a type of the Christ, can I be that sacrifice to save God's people? Can Moses be that sacrifice?

[ 24 : 14 ] No. God rejects his offer and why does God reject his offer? Because Moses is a sinner. He's a sinner too. How is he going to atone for the sins of the people when he himself has sinned that has not been atoned for?

He's a sinner. In fact, we've already seen some of Moses' sin. You may remember back in, we talked about the 40 year periods. There was 40 years and 40 years and 40 years.

So the first 40 years he's there in Egypt in the house of Pharaoh and you may remember he tries to protect one of the Israelites by killing one of the Egyptians and then he flees for 40 years.

And so, Moses has already committed murder. We have seen as well him respond in anger that wasn't righteous anger.

God judges him for striking the rock and he won't be allowed to enter into the promised land. So no, Moses cannot atone for their sin.

[ 25 : 19 ] Neither was the destruction of the idol, the drinking of it, the use of the sword, none of that is enough to atone for their sin.

God tells them that he's going to send a plague upon his people. Now, sometimes there's confusion because there's another time in which God sends a plague and 23 or 24,000 people die.

There is no more information given to us about this plague. That's not the same plague. We're just told God sends a plague among his people and we don't know what the result was. We don't even know if it's immediate or not.

But God takes the life of many selectively from a plague. A disease goes among the people and kills the people whom God is judging for their own sin. Isaiah 63, 10 says, But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.

Therefore, he turned to be their enemy and himself fought against them. So God has become an enemy to them. He's the divine warrior who's to fight for his people.

[ 26 : 31 ] He's promised them the promised land and that he will go before them and he'll wipe out their enemies. But now, God's turned and he's become an enemy to his own people because of their sin.

And Deuteronomy 6, 14 through 15, says, You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the people who are around you. For the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God.

Lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you and he destroys you from off the face of the earth. Now, that's later in time. He reminds them of this.

For the Lord your God, Yahweh, your God, in your midst is a jealous God. I think we need to understand that as well.

When we think of jealousy, I think we almost always think of jealousy as sin and rightfully so because when we're jealous for something, often it's a result of covetousness.

[ 27 : 29 ] We want something someone else has and so we're jealous. For God to be jealous for his worship that's being given to false gods is no sin.

God's desiring that which is good and right. He's desiring an end to this false worship which is sin. And the result is the God in your midst who's jealous when he sees you worship these other gods, lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

God is gracious and merciful not to do that in this instance. As hard as it is for us, we must understand that God has every right to do this. The wages of sin is death.

One sin's enough to condemn any of us and all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. They here have done this very thing that he warns against. They provoke the jealousy of God.

By going after these false gods. And so, I've talked a little bit already about the plague that comes upon them. But there's also a second aspect to this where this generation does not enter into the promised land because of this continued stiff netness.

[ 28 : 49 ] Stiff net? No. Okay. Because of the stiff nets they don't enter in. John Curid, one commentator, he says the following. First, there will be individual responsibility.

That is, the person who has sinned against Yahweh will be blotted out of God's book. And secondly, there is also a collective liability. The sin of the covenant people will rebound on the entire nation.

And so, God judges. He does blot some people out of his book by this plague. But he also, there's a cumulative or corporate judgment whereby they don't get to enter into the promised land.

But I also want you to see that God demonstrates mercy in his judgment. We may have already seen that by the fact that he doesn't kill them all in light of what's said in Deuteronomy 6. But Ian Campbell says the following.

Instead of cursing and judging all the people, God sends a plague. Thus the demands of justice are met, the righteousness of God is vindicated, and the grace of God is revealed in the fact that though 3,000 perish, many more are spared.

[ 30 : 03 ] And so we see the mercy of God that he doesn't judge them all. And yet, as he pointed out, the righteousness of God is vindicated, the demands of justice are met.

And we see the grace of God and what follows immediately after that. Verse 33 says, Whoever sinned against me, I will blot out of my book. Verse 34, But now, go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you.

Behold, my angels shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. But do you catch what happens there? They've broken God's covenant. The tablets have been broken to symbolize a broken covenant.

And God says what? Go back down to the mountain. My angel will lead you. This is the Shekinah glory we've seen, the manifestation, the theophany of God.

God's going to lead them into the promised land still. Now, we know it ends up being the second generation. but we see the mercy of God in this. He doesn't wipe them all out and start over with Moses or even with another people.

[ 31 : 12 ] He leads them on anyway. Nehemiah does a good job of recounting this when they, when it looks back at the history there, it says, Nehemiah 9, 16 through 21, but they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments.

Now, the stiff in the neck, you know what he's speaking of. This instance and that which follows in terms of their idolatry. They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them.

they attributed those to false gods. But they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt, which is probably the bull.

But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and did not forsake them.

Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, this is your God who brought you up out of Egypt and had committed great blasphemies, you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness.

[ 32 : 24 ] The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. You gave your good spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.



Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness and they lacked nothing. Their clothing did not wear out and their feet did not swell. I love that recounting of it.

I want you to see that that they have sinned greatly against God but what is the character or the nature of our God? we can look at this and say he told the Levites to kill some of them.

He sent a plague and blotted some of them out of his book but we see as well that you are a God ready to forgive gracious and merciful slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and you did not forsake them.

that ought to be an encouragement for us. This is still the character of our God.

[ 33 : 36 ] This doesn't excuse sin but we need to understand as well that our God is gracious and merciful slow to anger abounding in steadfast love and that even when we sin that God does not forsake us or leave us there in our sin.

So let's think about this in terms of application. I thought this sermon or this text ought to lead us to have a thankfulness for the work of Jesus Christ and what he does.

One thing it shows us is our need for a mediator and our need for a mediator who is greater than Moses who failed in his mediation. We need a greater mediator.

We need someone who can atone for our sins because that is the problem that we all face. As we said all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Atonement needs to be made for each of our sins and there's no one who can do it other than Jesus Christ.

Moses' life was not good enough to be an atoning sacrifice for the Israelites. He couldn't make atonement even for one of them. And so they had to bear the punishment for their sins.

[ 34 : 51 ] 1 John 4.10 says this In this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. That word propitiation is atoning sacrifice.

God sent Christ to be the atonement that Moses could not be. And then again 1 John 2.1-2 It says if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous.

He is the propitiation for our sins. If you think about what 1 John 2 says in light of what we read it's hard to think that John didn't have that in his mind or the spirit wasn't making a connection there.

If anyone does sin we have an advocate a mediator with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

He does what Moses cannot do. He's like Moses. He's speaking to the Father on our behalf but without sin. And he's able to pay the price for your sins.

[ 36 : 01 ] And therefore when we think about the punishment for our sin Jesus bore the punishment for your sin if you've trusted in Jesus Christ he bore the punishment for your sin in his death on the cross.

He was blotted out so that we could have our name stay in the book of life and never be blotted out. And so Jesus lays down his life. He offers himself up as a sacrifice.

John 10 11 I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. This is what Moses is attempting to do but he cannot do. John 15 13 greater love is no man than this that someone laid down his life for his friends.

And so we ought to be thankful for such a savior. When we look to the character of God this is a demonstration that our God is merciful and gracious and slow to anger. Jesus Christ his word his atonement his mediation on our behalf.

Now as I say that I want us to understand as well it would be easy based on our text to assume that I've heard people say things like the God of the Old Testament was an angry mean God and the God of the New Testament is a God of love as if there's some separation in the Trinity there as if the will of God the Father and the will of God the Son are somehow different from one another.

[ 37 : 30 ] They're not. But it could also be easy for me in light of the message today to think well God's just a God of love he's going to forgive our sin he's merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

But hopefully you caught the balance even in this passage. God's faithful to bring his people into the promised land which symbolically points us to heaven. They journey through the wilderness of life they're brought into eternal life and yet God still judges the sin.

and so I want you to understand that God will confront our sin. The slowness to anger the graciousness the mercy of God does not result in God just sweeping our sin under the carpet and ignoring it.

Stuffing it under the bed and hoping no one ever looks under there or in the closet when company comes over. God doesn't just hide our sin sin has to be dealt with. Romans 2 5-6 says but because of your hard and impenitent heart which sounds a little bit like stiff nets you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

He will render to each one according to his words. Our text in verse 34 says nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

[ 38 : 58 ] Now the immediate context I think is when God brings the plague among them. He's going to deal with their sin. But there's also a future reference that already and the not yet and the not yet reference the future reference is when Christ returns when God visits on the day of judgment he's going to deal with sin.

And so all of our sins will be judged and the reality is this it's either judged in the person of Jesus Christ Christ. He paid the price for our sins. He's our atonement or we pay it ourselves.

And an eternity in hell is not enough to pay for our sin. Now I think one maybe even the lesser point but still that ought to encourage us that we need to destroy our idols.

You see what Moses did he comes back in the camp and he immediately he destroys that object for which I was a distraction for them a worship for them. 1 Peter 2 24 says Jesus he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds you have been healed.

We need to look in our own lives and see what is it that becomes something that I desire more than God something that I love more than God maybe we can think of it even in terms of I have free time available where do I want to spend my time with God or with something else?

[ 40 : 38 ] What is it we desire we want? Maybe even what is it that if God were to take that away from us we would be angry with God? We'd shake our fist at God and blame him.

God's not what we're worshiping we're worshiping this thing and if we don't get it we're mad at God God's just a means to the end. whatever it is in our life that becomes an idol for us we've got to put it to death to mortify sin but also we have to realize that we all have sinned and we need to look to our Savior Jesus Christ and so really my last point of application is to say that the question that Moses asked is really the question I want to ask today that even God is asking us who is on the Lord's side?

we have to decide each one of us what side we're on Matthew 12 30 Jesus says whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters now there's a bit of logic being used there but there's some who are with them and then there's some who are not and what's the third group?

there is no third group is there? either you're with them or you're not with them and I want you to understand that when we look at this and God says who is on the Lord's side?

there's not some third option here either you're in opposition to God or you bow the knee to Christ he's your Savior you look to him by faith for salvation so are you with Jesus and are you on his side?

[ 42 : 19 ] if your answer is no then you can know what side you're on you're opposed to him Jesus is asking you today are you for him or are you against him?

now if your answer is not that you're for him or that you are against him how can you be on the Lord's side? for the Levites it was pretty simple we're going to go to Moses and we're going to fight against those who are opposed Jesus makes it very clear that there's one way to the Father it's by faith in Jesus Christ what does faith in Jesus Christ mean?

well that means I look to Christ and say Jesus is my atoning sacrifice he and him alone has paid the price for my sins there's nothing I can do or anyone else can do that can save me other than Jesus Christ salvation is in Christ alone it's trusting in him to be your savior and so I want to encourage you as we look at this and as we see this question before us who is on the Lord's side ask yourself that question and my prayer is that all of you would leave here knowing that you're on the Lord's side by faith in Jesus Christ let's pray together generally father we thank you there is even an option a possibility that we could ever be on your side in light of what we've seen in Israel and Lord we know our own sins we have sinned in similar ways perhaps even in more grievous ways we haven't broken three or four of your commandments we've broken all ten of your commandments and Lord we know that we are deserving of even greater judgment than they tasted when they tasted the bitterness of their sin when some were ran through with swords others who died from a plague and yet

Lord in the midst of all that we know ourselves deserving of more but we also see that you are God who's merciful and slow to anger abound in steadfast love forgiving our sins Lord none of that's possible apart from Christ taking upon himself the wrath that our sins deserve the punishment the judgment that he would atone for our sins in our place Lord we pray that there would be none so arrogant so stiff net so obstinate that they would leave here today content with not being on your side content to know that in the day of judgment they're going to pay for their own sin Lord calls us to look to Christ and trust in him by faith that he might be the atoning sacrifice for all who are in this room we pray this in Christ's name amen let's stand and sing our closing hymn 500 and we'll to fold