

Who Is On the Lord's Side?

(Go To Meeting)

Lindsay Stephens—July 19, 2024

In His infinite wisdom, God has provided mankind with the freedom to choose what directions we make in life. We can make all kinds of physical choices in building, in creating, writing, and how to earn a living.

God has also provided us with the freedom to make spiritual choices. We were not made to be automatic robots with choices made for us, having no influence on building character.

So in this message, I intend to reflect a bit on where we've come from and where we are headed. I'm referring to the society around us rather than individually, but we have to make choices ourselves, obviously.

What does God expect from us if we are confronted with similar circumstances? But firstly, I would like us to turn to the Scripture from where I pick up the title of this message in Exo. 32. Incidentally, this is the chapter straight after God made a special Sabbath covenant in Exo. 31, where God said to Moses that *'the Sabbath was a sign between God and His people to identify Him so that they would know that it is God who sanctifies them!'*

After the children of Israel had received the Ten Commandments, had heard the voice of God at Mount Sinai, with all that happened before that in Egypt, and all the miracles that God had done for them, this is what they did:

Exodus 32:1: "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, then the people gathered themselves to Aaron, and they said to him, 'Up! Make us gods which shall go before us, 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, they set up a committee. They were disrespectful to Aaron, who was left in charge of the camp in Moses' absence! They were certainly disrespectful to God after all He had done for them. Unfortunately, Aaron did not resist them in a riot to do the wrong thing and make the idol he knew was against God. He even went this far:

Verse 4: "And he took *them* from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. And they said, 'These *are* your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.' And when Aaron saw *the calf*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow *is* a feast to the LORD'" (vs 4-5).

So, Aaron told an absolute lie! ***He was a high priest committing idolatry!*** The Aaronic priesthood would have a history of weaknesses and failings until Jesus came in the flesh and qualified to be a High Priest with no weakness whatsoever.

Verse 6: "And they rose up early on the next morning, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

Well, they had a sex orgy. I believe this part in Cecil de Mille's *The Ten Commandments* was quite accurate in what was going on with the people. There were many lewd acts with violence, which was becoming increasingly out of control. It is the result of all this going on that God told Moses to get down from the mountain.

Verse 7: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go! Get you down, for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*. They have turned aside quickly out of the way, which I commanded them. They have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, "These *are* your gods, O Israel, who have brought you up out of the land of Egypt'" (vs 7-8). *And we see God's reaction to this revolt against His Laws in:*

Verse 9. "And the LORD said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it *is* a stiff-necked people. And now leave Me alone, so that My wrath may burn hot against them and that I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation'" (vs 9-10).

So, God wanted to see what reaction Moses would have had to this statement that he made. Moses could have said, 'Okay, Lord, wipe them out. I won't let you down. I'm tired of them all anyway.' But he didn't.

Verse 11: "And Moses prayed to the LORD his God, and said, 'LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak and say, "He brought them out with an evil intent, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth"? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people.' Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, "I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and all this

land that I have spoken of will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever” (vs 11-13).

So, God remembered that He made a covenant, a maledictory oath, to Abraham and to the promises made to the descendants of Israel. It was a test of Moses' character and the response that he would give. In any case, Moses was very angry with the idolatry of the people

Verse 19: And it came to pass, as soon as he came near to the camp and saw the calf and dancing, then Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them at the bottom of the mountain. And he took the calf, which they had made and burned it in the fire, and pulverized it to powder, and scattered it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it: (vs 19-20) *Drastic action was needed!*

Verse 21: “And Moses said to Aaron, ‘What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?’”

So, Aaron was left in charge, he should have known what to do if the people rebelled.

Verse 22: “And Aaron said, ‘Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on mischief.’” *He described human nature or the human heart right there!*

Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

Exodus 32:23: “For they said to me, ‘Make us gods who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them break it off.’ And they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and there came out this calf” (vs 23-24).

This was one of the most ludicrous excuses in the Bible to say virtually that the calf just sprang out of the fire. Aaron knew how to make a golden calf from his experience in Egypt. Some questions do arise from this whole event:

- Why did they do this when Moses was gone, but not when he was there?
- Why did Aaron give into them so easily?
- What does it tell us about Aaron?
- What does this show about their relationship to God?

The problem was that the people did not have a relationship with God at all themselves. They were playing lip service to God because of Moses' strong leadership

God had performed many great miracles through Moses, both in Egypt and since leaving Egypt. The result was that people greatly respected Moses and followed instructions while he was there. But while he was away, it was a different story.

So, at this stage, I intend to make a few points about this:

1. This great sin was done when Moses wasn't there. ‘When the cat's away, the mice will play’ as the saying goes.
2. People are basically spiritual. The people still felt the need to express themselves spiritually. So like in Rom. 1, they decided to ‘exchange worship of the true God for an idol made with human hands.’

People tend to have short-term memories. They only tend to think in terms of the here and now, forgetting about the miracles God had done for them. Human nature is ‘desperately wicked.’ Satan will use any opportunity to build up on doubts that arise over a period of time and allow it to spread like a cancer.

3. The people gave undue respect to Moses at God's expense. They said that Moses is the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt when it was clearly God who achieved this. Whenever there was a trial with water or food, they were quick to blame Moses.
4. What can we say about Aaron here? As a leader, the people, a leader of the people, God held him to a high standard. He should have stood up to the people and quickly dealt with this foolish idea. However, he quickly gave into them.

Whatever his motivation was, the lesson for all of us is this, never give into public pressure of a mob to do wrong. It may be the most expedient thing to do at the time, but not the right action in the eyes of God. As a whole, politicians make decisions based solely on public opinion surveys, whether or not they are right.

5. People throughout history have liked worshipping something visible. They liked the thought of seeing is believing. But this golden calf, visible as it was, certainly wasn't going to save Israel from any trial.
6. The people did not abandon God altogether. Verse 5 showed us that they made ‘a feast to the Lord’ as they were sacrificing to this idol they had made.

But by this secretism, they were blending false and pagan religions with the worship of the true God. This has occurred often in Scripture with examples in kings such as Solomon and Jeroboam.

In v 6 there is a direct connection between idol worship and sin. Because idols can't see, hear or judge, the people who make them have no fear of being punished for sin. By worshipping these idols, they could assign any standards to these idols that they created. It means *they could have complete freedom to do whatever they wanted to do*; whatever they like, **and not worry or feel guilty about doing wrong or being disciplined!**

As soon as they started worshipping this false God, they lost all self-control and started committing gross acts of immorality as a whole.

Verse 25:

'And when Moses saw that the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked to *their* shame among 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 themselves to him."

The rest of the chapter describes about how Israel suffered because of their great sin. About 3,000 died that day at the hands of the sons of Levi.

Verse 35: "And the LORD plagued the people because they made the calf, which Aaron made."

What has this event got to do with us during our time of being called into the Body of Christ? After all, in this day and age of a more sophisticated society, ***we should be above making a physical idol, bowing down to it and worshipping it as God!***

But as Satan is 'the god of this world,' being totally on God's side is not as simple as that. ***Satan employs subtle tactics to try to deceive God's elect!*** He's not worried about the rest of the world, because he knows that they are not on the Lord's side. Satan knows what strongholds we have to overcome in the mind.

If Satan has his way totally with us, he could use A.I. to send us somewhere out in the universe and entrap us with virtual reality to put our minds totally off balance with where our thoughts need to be.

If that happens, God would not be able to use us for His purpose. So, all Satan needs to do to deceive the so-called out ones enough to be 'offside' with God and stray off a narrow path that leads to eternal life. And it doesn't take much to do this.

Compare this with an ocean voyage on a ship across the Pacific from San Francisco to Sydney, just as an example. If the bearings were out by one degree, you would be out by 112 miles off course at the end of the destination. Since God is perfect, this would not measure up.

This world has the idea that near enough is good enough. There are so many gray areas with no exact right or wrong ways where everyone can have their own opinion, just like in:

Judges 21:25: "...Every man did *what was* right in his own eyes."

These days it is more popular to be 'woke' on all sorts of moral issues as they are contrary to the Word of God. As these trends continue, those people in the Churches of God will become increasingly more unpopular with the world as it becomes more blatantly entrenched under Satan's system. What will it take to be on the Lord's side as times become so much worse than now? Professing Christians, Jews, and Muslims all believe that they have God on their side. But the questions are avoided:

- Do we do God's will?
- What does he say to do?

American songwriter and singer Bob Dylan had a song out in the 1960s called *With God on Our Side*, and as catchy as the song was, it misses the point.

God does not conform to the conditions or the whims of human beings. We need to ***seek God on His terms*** so that we can be on His side. God doesn't take sides. He is on His own side of:

- righteousness
- perfection
- love for his creation

He won't be on anyone's side who:

- lives in sin
- rejects His Truth
- prefers darkness to Light

Jesus said that ***the one who is not with Me is against Me!*** We ought to look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb.12:2).

- He starts it
- He finishes it
- He's the Alpha and the Omega

The righteous of God is revealed from faith unto faith (Rom. 1:17). It is His faith that matters; that faith meant His sacrifice, our being redeemed by His perfect sinless shed blood for us. Having done this, He is at the right hand of the Father as:

- our High Priest
- Advocate
- Intercessor

and wants us to be on His side!

We do need to be on the right side, because there is a major war going on that the world at large

does not realize. This war, which is between God and His angels, against Satan and the demons, has been going on for a very long time.

Very simply put, any individual in the world is either on God's side or on Satan's side; it's as simple as that!

2-Cor. 6—the Apostle Paul had his battles against the world, against the Jewish Sanhedrin.

2-Corinthians 6:14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common? And what fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness?”

This applies with doctrine. The world today is abounding and multiplying in lawlessness.

Verse 15: “And what union *does* Christ *have* with Belial? Or what part *does* a believer *have* with an unbeliever?”

Belial here refers to ‘the sons of foolishness.’ For example, we have the corrupt and unconverted leaders of the world, and they are serving Satan.

Verse 16: “And what agreement *is there between* a Temple of God and idols? For you are a Temple of *the* living God... [those who have been called] exactly as God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,**’ says **the Lord,** **and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you**” (vs 16-17).

The Apostle John in Revelation says, ‘**come out of her**, My people’—*that's Babylon!*

This is the opposite of the ecumenical movement, and it's the amalgamation of all the world's religions. We are to come out of them and have nothing that is contrary to the Word of God. There are conditions to God's promises.

Verse 18: “And I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says *the Lord Almighty.*”

Do we think this is going to be an easy affair to live God's way? *Satan the devil certainly doesn't want to make it easy for any of those whom God has called!* In fact, He doesn't want any of us to make it in the God's Kingdom!

Jesus had His own confrontation with Satan in the wilderness. He had to overcome Satan.

Matthew 10:34: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

This is in this current age. The sword, of course, is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12, Eph. 6:17).

Verse 35: “For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies *shall be those of his own household*” (vs 35-36).

IF those in the household are not on God's side, ***THEN*** they are the spiritual enemies of anyone who is converted.

Verse 37: “The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

So we need to prioritize; ***God the Father and Jesus Christ must always come first!***

Verse 38: “And the one who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.”

It's that serious, brethren. We must all be in on this with no half measures, no sitting on the fence. Think of how the tribe of Levi responded to Moses' question in Exo. 32:26.

What does God want from us? *God wants us to do the right thing; He wants us to look to Him, and **not to the world!***

Isaiah 55:6: “Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.”

And this is so profound, we can't take it for granted. Because think of the time that is coming when there will be a famine of the hearing of the word (Amos 8:11-12).

Verse 7: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

God is very merciful; He is ready to forgive upon repentance at any time. So, when repentance is done by returning to the Lord, God's mercy will be given.

Verse 8: “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways,’ says the LORD.”

We all need to come to this point and understand that God knows the whole perspective the whole perspective of his great plan for eternity. On the other hand, human beings in the flesh with a carnal mind tend to focus on the here and now.

Verse 9: “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways,

and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

To get on God's side we need to be aiming for the best we can be and seek to have the mind of Christ.

I want to provide a few rough statistics of the current world's population of about 8 billion: About 31.6% are classified as Christian just under a third. It is also the most rapidly declining religion, predominantly in the Israelite countries of the:

- United States
- Canada
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- New Zealand
- Western Europe

Of the 2.5 billion people proclaiming Christianity, about:

- half are Catholic
- 37% are Protestant
- 12% are Orthodox
- about 1.5% are Christian
- 1% classified as other, which includes such groups as:
 - ✓ Jehovah's Witnesses,
 - ✓ Seventh-day Adventists
 - ✓ Seventh-day Baptists
 - ✓ Mennonites
 - ✓ Hutterites
 - ✓ other minority groups
 - ✓ **and within this 1% are also the Churches of God**

So, of all the world's population, ***we are very blessed and privileged to be called out to have an understanding of God's great plan and purpose!*** We're very much a little flock.

I present these brief statistics to emphasize the fact that all through the ages, ***those on God's side have always been in a very small minority!*** This includes the time before the Flood, all throughout the post-Flood, which includes the nations of Israel and Judah during the time of Christ, and all the time since then.

This same situation applies today of those who walk in the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life.

The Apostle Paul brings this out in some detail in his letter to the Ephesians. He begins with a normal introduction to his epistles. He writes that God the Father and Jesus Christ wants us to have grace, with a direct relationship with Them.

Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us

with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ.”

God has put His Spirit into us to help us with our conversion and spiritual growth.

Verse 4: “According as He has personally chosen us for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love.”

The Apostle Peter says that we are ‘***a chosen stock, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, people for the possession of God.***’ (1-Pet.2:9) *That is spiritual Israel.*

Verse 5: “Having predestinated us for sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will.”

Just think of this: ***those whom God calls***, which includes us, ***are the heart, the core and the center of the work of God!*** The rest of the universe will come later.

Verse 6: “To *the* praise of *the* glory of His grace, wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*; in Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (vs 6-7).

We have redemption from sin, from Satan and from self. God's secret plan is made known to us, but not to the world because they won't repent, and they are not currently on the Lord's side.

Verse 8: “Which He has made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence; having made known to us the mystery of His own will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself” (vs 8-9).

He wants us to have this opportunity, brethren. The whole universe is out there waiting for us.

Verse 10: “That in *the Divine* plan for the fulfilling of *the* times, He might bring all things together in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.”

The fulfilling of the times is revealed in the Sabbath and the Holy Days (Gen. 1:14) and Lev. 23 has them all listed in order. There are laws out there in the universe that God has put in place that we look forward to having a full understanding of.

Verse 11: “*Yes*, in Him, in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestinated according to His purpose, Who is working out all things according to the counsel of His own will.”

Just like those mentioned in the faith chapter—Heb. 11—and many others not mentioned in that chapter, our inheritance has not been given to us, yet. But it is coming ***if we remain faithful.***

Verse 12: “That we might be to *the* praise of His glory, who first trusted in the Christ; in Whom you also trusted after hearing the Word of the Truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, after believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (vs 12-13)

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands, as Paul says:

Romans 8:9: “However, you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” *At this point he is not on the Lord's side!*

Ephesians 1:14: “Which is *the* earnest of our inheritance until *the* redemption of the purchased possession, to *the* praise of His glory.”

The earnest is *a small down payment of our inheritance*, a deposit if you like, with the promise that full payment will be made later. The full payment will occur when as perfect spirit beings we will be shining as the stars.

Perhaps a comparison of this is with the small number God has called currently with the rest of the world, and their opportunity will come later.

Verse 15: “For this cause, I also, after hearing of the faith in the Lord Jesus that is among you, and the love toward all the saints.”

Paul states the reason behind this letter of encouragement. This is something that must be worked at. Everything must be grounded in love, for God is love (John 4:16). ***To be on the Lord's side, to have the right attitude is absolutely necessary on our part in order to see this battle against Satan and the world through to the end!***

In the book of Proverbs, there are so many examples of living the right way as opposed to the wrong way, and of having the right attitudes or the wrong attitudes.

Proverbs 15:28: “**The heart of the righteous studies to answer,** but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.”

I just want to concentrate on the first half of that. We have to put in the effort to procure the answers, to apply them, and to grow in character.

Verse 29: “The LORD *is* far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.” *The righteous pray for the right things, like:*

- praising God the Father and Jesus Christ for all They have done
- giving thanks for our calling
- for repentance and help in overcoming
- for more understanding of God's Word and Truth
- the elders and for the brethren
- for more love towards God the Father and Jesus Christ
- for more love toward the brethren in all areas
- for the sick and those having trials

and so much more

Verse 30: “The light of the eyes rejoices the heart; a good report makes the bones fat.”

So the way we think affects our bones and is beneficial for our overall health and well-being.

Verse 31: “The ear that hearkens to the reproof of life shall remain among the wise.”

This is fundamental. If anyone wants to be wise, they need to hearken to good advice. Where is the best possible advice available? ***In the Word of God!***

Verse 32: “He who refuses instruction despises his own soul...” *This is a result of rejecting the Word of God!*

“...but he who hearkens to reproof gains understanding. The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom, and before honor *is* humility” (vs 32-33).

We have to be in awe of Him, and there is a major key here. *God gives grace to the humble* (James 4:6). Also, in Isa. 66 says that God looks to the poor and contrite spirit *'who trembles at My Word.'*

Proverbs 16:3: “Commit your works unto the LORD, and your thoughts shall be established.”

This is the way of life, the way we are to live. Jesus said, ***'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'*** So, it should be our thoughts, in our thoughts all the time.

As I previously mentioned, and as we all know, there is a great spiritual battle going on. This war is going to escalate and will reach a crescendo before it's all over. I want to emphasize why it is so important for us to be on the right side in this war.

Revelation 19:11: “And I saw heaven open; and behold, a white horse...”

Now I don't want this white horse to be confused with the white horse of Rev. 6:2 because that white horse is false prophets.

“...and He Who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. And His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns; *and* He had a name written that no one knows except Him. And *He was* clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is The Word of God” (vs 11-13).

We think of the vengeance of God upon this world for all the blood shed from the time of Abel. The Word—Logos—was there from the very beginning (John 1:1-2).

Verse 14: “And the armies in heaven were following Him on white horses; *and* they were clothed in fine linen, white and pure.”

So, this is the righteousness of the saints and we will be perfect spirit beings, *perfected spirit beings*, completely in line with God's Plan and on the Lord's side.

Verse 15: “And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword...”

This sword is a staff or scepter. It refers to complete continuity of government and rulership.

“...that with it He might smite the nations; and He shall shepherd them with an iron rod; and He treads the winepress of the fury and the wrath of the Almighty God. And on *His* garment and on His thigh He has a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords” (vs 15-16).

So, brethren, no matter what the circumstances will be in the future, **we will need to be steadfast, resolute and fixed in our own mind** when the question will be put to us: **Who is on the Lord's side?**

Scriptural References:

- 1) Exodus 32:1, 4-13, 19-22
- 2) Jeremiah 17:9
- 3) Exodus 32:23-26, 35
- 4) Judges 2:25
- 5) 2-Corinthians 6:14-18
- 6) Matthew 10:34-38
- 7) Isaiah 55:6-9
- 8) Ephesians 1:3-13
- 9) Romans 8:9
- 10) Ephesians 1:14-15
- 11) Proverbs 15:28-33
- 12) Proverbs 16:3
- 13) Revelation 19:11-16

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Exodus 31
- Romans 1

- Hebrews 12:2
- Romans 1:17
- Hebrews 4:12
- Ephesians 6:17
- Amos 8:11-12
- 1 Peter 2:9
- Genesis 1:14
- Leviticus 23
- John 4:16
- James 4:6
- Isaiah 66
- Revelation 6:2
- John 1:1-2

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