

'As for me and my household'.

Good morning everyone I am going to read some verses to you from Joshua 24 but before I do, here's some background and context to them.

As you know in the Old Testament the Israelites were Gods chosen people. God had taken them through many trials and tribulations out of the wilderness into the Promised Land.

And now they had arrived in the Promised Land and were living there comfortably.

And Joshua (the successor to Moses) was their leader. But now he was an old man and realised he didn't have much time left so he called all the Israelites together into the presence of God to speak to them on the Lord behalf one last time.

Realising they were now in a land with many foreign gods, temptations and distractions all around them.

It was a cry of renewed commitment to them and a warning also.

Joshua 24: 14-24

*"Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, **and serve the LORD.***

*¹⁵ but if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.**"*

¹⁶ Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes.

He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled. ¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."

¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.

²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you."

²¹ But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."²² Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

“Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied. ²³“Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

²⁴And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.”

I think we could all agree there is so much much happening in our world at this time. Events seem to be gathering pace, increasing in intensity. We’ve just come through Covid, we’re in the middle of a war between Russia & Ukraine (which could escalate further) and now there’s a major cost of living crisis. What next we may add?

With all this going on in our world there seems to be more confusion. Politicians / world leaders don’t seem to know what to do. The truth is nothing is clear cut anymore, there is so much ambiguity, nothing is black and white, so many grey areas, nothing is certain,

I think all this confusion and hesitancy of our age is summed up when our politicians ‘cannot even define what a woman is’!

I feel for young people today also - when I left school things seemed much clearer, there were only 3 career options! Shop work, building or engineering, there was only one religion taught (Christianity) and boys were boys and girls were girls!

Young people have so many more choices today, but are they better off? I don’t think so! They are so overloaded with data / information they become more confused and that leads to apathy.

In the spiritual realm, there seems to be a divide occurring. Many churches today have decided to compromise the gospel and only preach a palatable message. I believe behind all this there is a ‘sifting taking place’.

And this sifting is making things clearer for us - forcing us to make a choice and that choice is expressed in our reading this morning – ‘choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve’

Now in complete contrast to the confusion all around us is the bible. This book (hold it up) it is completely clear on who we are, whom we must serve and how we should live our lives.

I love the clarity of the scriptures, so let’s set the record straight. In this book to begin with it tells you there are only 2 genders to created sexes in this world. Man & woman (Gen 3)

That there are only 2 conditions/ states you can be in - you’re either in Christ or you’re not (either saved or unsaved)

Your either born again or still in your sins.

You have one of 2 destinies; to be with Christ for eternity or suffer judgement and eternal ruin.

There are only 2 paths in life; you’re either on the narrow way that leads to life or the broad way that leads to destruction

You're either the sheep or the goats
You're either in the light or darkness
You're either hot or cold

We serve **one of 2 masters**; the Lord God or Satan.

There is no middle ground no luke warm, diluted mixture here, your either one or the other.

It tells us there are only 2 types of people and 2 possible conditions and 2 destinies but the bible also tells you **there is only one God and only one way to God.**

[John 14:6](#) Jesus says; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The scriptures are absolutely clear, they leave no room for doubt and in our world of confusion and ambiguity we can set our compass by them.
So this morning want to look at some of the barriers that get in the way of us 'serving the Lord?' as expressed in our reading. Firstly;

1. **'throw away the foreign gods that are among you'**

You may say, we don't have other gods? Well what is a god with a small g? They are alive and kicking and deceiving people today as they ever were! They exist in the form of idols - an idol is;

(JC Ryle) "*Idolatry is a worship in which the **honour due to God** and to Him only, is given to some of His creatures or to some invention of His creatures*".

There are so many things we give 'honour to' today, that dilute our service to the Lord. In many ways they are still remnants of the old life.
Football - giving to much honour....

It's interesting that it says of many of the 'good Kings' in the Old Testament that 'they did right in the eyes of the Lord but they didn't completely get rid of the old practises' they kept some of the worship idols of the lands they settled in. Some of the supposedly harmless artefacts.

And in the end it was their downfall! – Their Achilles heel. **It was an open door to the enemy.** They were defeated. They became ineffective and rebellious.

I know not long after I became a Christian. I got rid of a number of my old music albums. The reason being; a lot of the words weren't right. Just worldly wisdom and beliefs and emotionally they transported me back to that place of depression I was in before I was a Christian.

We must close every door; denounce everything that does not give honour to God.
'You shall have no other gods before Me' (First Commandment)

Secondly we have to recognise we are in a battle and we have to fight - Ephesians 6 says 'our battle is not against flesh and blood'

Our walk of faith is one of constant resistance. It's interesting that these Israelites in our story, after they made a choice to follow God, later on ended up having to fight to keep the land they had won.

We have to do likewise – every step of the way - holding onto the ground Jesus has won for us.

This is JC Ryle about the fight were in.

The first thing I have to say is this: *True Christianity is a fight.*

“True Christianity”—mind that word “true.” Let there be no mistake about my meaning. There is a vast quantity of religion current in the world which is not true, genuine Christianity. It passes muster; it satisfies sleepy consciences; but it is not good money. It is not the real thing which was called Christianity 2000 years ago.

There are thousands of men and women who go to churches and chapels every Sunday, and call themselves Christians. Their names are in the baptismal register. They are reckoned Christians while they live. They are married with a Christian marriage-service.

They are buried as Christians when they die. But you never see any “fight” about their religion! Of spiritual strife, and exertion, and conflict, and self-denial, and watching, and warring they know literally nothing at all.

Such Christianity may satisfy man, and those who say anything against it may be thought very hard and uncharitable; but it certainly is not the Christianity of the Bible. It is not the religion which the Lord Jesus founded, and His Apostles preached. **True Christianity is “a fight.”**

He goes on later to encourage anyone who finds their everyday experience is of constant struggling with the enemy.

“Reader, take comfort about your soul, if you know anything of an inward fight and conflict. It is not everything, I am well aware, but it is something. Do you find in your heart of hearts a spiritual struggle? Do you feel anything of the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that you cannot do the things you would? (Gal. v. 17).

Are you conscious of two principles within you, contending for the mastery? Do you see anything of war in your inward man? Well, thank God for it! It is a good sign. It is evidence not to be despised. Anything is better than apathy, stagnation, deadness, and indifference.

You are in a better state than many. The most part of so-called Christians have no feeling at all. You are evidently no friend of Satan. Like the kings of this world, he wars not

against his own subjects. The very fact that he assaults you should fill your mind with hope.

Reader, I say again, take comfort, the child of God has two great marks about him, and of these two you have one. HE MAY BE KNOWN BY HIS INWARD WARFARE, AS WELL AS BY HIS INWARD PEACE”

That’s interesting the Christian is recognised by 2 characteristics. HE MAY BE KNOWN BY HIS INWARD WARFARE, AS WELL AS BY HIS INWARD PEACE”

If you’re a Christian you are recognised as a fighter you have to go the full 15 rounds with the devil (but with God at your side)

As soon as you become passive in any area you’re in trouble! Passivity is a great danger for the Christian – slipping back and taking your foot off the gas in the spiritual realm will make you a very vulnerable target for the enemy.

‘The devil roams around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour’ (1 Peter 5:8)

I woke up the other night feeling anxious and troubled lots of rotten thoughts coming at me. I heard a voice inside my head say; ‘defend yourself’. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you’. (James 4:7) its simple really, it should be obvious to us. But often it isn’t!

Thirdly and finally we have a choice, ‘choose this day who you serve’.

It’s not just knowing the right way you have to do it. (James 2:14-26)

Sitting on the fence is a choice, agnostics, those that say ‘they are not sure there is a God’ they have made their choice - to do nothing for now! –

I knew a chap once who said ‘he would put off becoming a Christian until he got older, until it suited him’! I told him that is a very dangerous thing - you’re talking about your eternal destiny. ‘Today is the day of salvation’ (2 Corinthians 6:2) the scriptures say.

Sorry if I’m too much in your face! I feel at times I’m too often bringing a challenging message. It’s because I believe the Lord often challenges us. To get us out of our ‘status quo’ to make us ready for His coming. To make us Holy.

If you’re a Christian expect to be sifted in these days. The end is near. God tests our heart (1 Thessalonians 2: 4-5)

So in conclusion will you make the commitment? Maybe for the first time or more likely a recommitment to follow Him? Will you say – **“But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”** From this day on, to the best of your ability, with God’s help?

Maybe there are some here this morning that have never made that commitment. ‘Today is the day of your salvation’. Come down from sitting on the fence.

Maybe there are some here this morning that have slipped back in their Christian walk; you know you're not in the right place, backslidden even? Today is the day to take the opportunity to renew your faith.

Maybe there are some here this morning who want to go deeper with God. Know Him and serve Him in a deeper and closer way? This is the time.

Maybe there are some here this morning who want to put the old life behind you again, to renounce and repent of anything you're holding onto? Anything you're struggling with, that is getting in the way of you serving the Lord? This is the time and place.

If you do - don't hold back in moving forward with the Lord.

There will be an opportunity at the end of the service to come forward. To be prayed for. A few of the leaders will wait around at the front and pray for you.

And finally let's remember there is One who trod this path before us - lets us enter in willingly to serve Him, seeing it as a honour a privilege to follow in his footsteps – serve Him and you will find yourself amongst the saved. Those that he justified he also glorified.

Amen.

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