

Who will you serve?

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[0 : 00] Now let us turn back to 1 Kings chapter 18, and we focus our attention on verse 27.

Verse 27, chapter 18 of 1 Kings. And so it was at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, cry aloud, for he is God, either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.

Amen.

Ahab and 450 prophets of Baal who hated Elijah and had nothing at all to do with what he stood for. And then there was the vast crowd of people, the people of Israel, in their backslidden state in moral and spiritual darkness.

[1 : 38] And standing alone for God and for truth and for righteousness was Elijah, the faithful servant of the Lord.

Three classes of people gathered there that day on Carmel. The servants of the servants of the evil one, the devoted servant of God, and the vast crowd that were not decided one way or another what to do about deciding for the God of their fathers, or the God that Jezebel had brought and introduced them to Baal.

Tonight, this congregation here is divided up like that. There are some here who are the faithful people of God.

And there may be those who are the faithful people of God. And there may be those who are the faithful people of God. And there may be those, emphasize that word, may be those, who are in our midst, who will never be saved, no matter what preachers they hear.

And there might be those who are the faithful people of God. And these people, when the prayer is placed. And students of the Moabites and Jezebel And that day, who can't decide whether to follow the God of their fathers or go after the God of this world, and the things of this world.

[3 : 09] it's interesting and informative to read that Elijah did not say one word not one word to the prophets of Baal his words were directed to those who were undecided what to do those who believed in the God of Israel in a loose kind of sense and who were also drawn to Baal the heathen God they hadn't made any commitment to either and they were floating about and there are many in the church tonight like that the majority of this congregation are made up I believe of people who love the Lord and who made a firm commitment to follow Jesus and serve him and trust him as their saviour it is to there are others though that haven't come to that specifically yet and it's to them that God is speaking tonight in a special way those that have yet to put a trust in Christ as saviour and make a firm commitment to follow him and this is what God is saying to you tonight you are still unconverted how long halt ye between two opinions if the Lord be God follow him if Baal then follow him and our prayer tonight is that someone even one person itself would say not any longer

Lord from this night forward I am going to believe in Jesus and I am going to follow him we have all heard the gospel so often since our childhood days and the truth of God has been set before us so plainly down through the years it's time that we all decided all of us decided one way or the other if the Lord be God follow him and if Baal is God then follow him the distinction that was necessary that day is the first point that I have here most of the people gathered at Carmel that day believed in Jehovah in a some sort of loose way they believed he was God but they believed that Baal was God as well and they thought that they could follow the two and easily worship and serve them both they did not reject the God of their fathers all together on the one hand and neither did they worship Baal with all their hearts on the other hand is that a picture of you tonight in this service is that a picture of you you respect

God the God of your parents and grandparents but you also serve the world and the things of this world as well you believe you're doing quite well and that this is all that God expects of you tonight

he says no that will not do there are two opinions opinions which are contrary to each other and you can never blend the two opinions together how true it is that you cannot serve God and serve the world and the flesh and the devil at the same time you cannot serve God and mammon Jesus said warning about the love of money you can't love God and serve the devil at the same time it was said that the Roman warrior

Mark Anthony tied and yoked two lions together to pull his chariot we don't know whether that is true or not but one thing is true nobody could ever yoke these two lions together the lion of the tribe of Judah Jesus Christ and the lion of the pit of hell the devil let's remember that when you are tempted to say I can be a Christian and I can go to the discos and to the pubs and to the otherworldly amusements I can still serve God and come out on Sunday to the morning service maybe and that will be enough you can get away with it in other areas of your life but not in the area of your soul's salvation in the things of eternity you cannot get away with it it has to be whole hearted for God or not how many there are throughout the church who imagine that they serve God and that even go to the extent to say that they are the

God's elect and yet when you probe deep into their hearts and into their lives there's dishonesty there there's covetousness there they are slaves of various lusts slanderers gossipers liars and so on well Elijah said to the people that day there are two opinions you're halting between the two opinions and you must choose one or the other and that day at Carmel the words of Elijah were heard by the prophets of Baal along with all the other people but they did not have any effect upon them they didn't put them up or down the words of Elijah and there were people like that in the [10:16] New Testament as well and we believe they can be among us too in our congregations to this day Paul wrote about them in Romans 128 and he even said this as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge God gave them over to a reprobate mind that's an awful thing to be given over to a reprobate mind when you persistently refuse to obey the call of the gospel that God will come one day to say that's enough that person has heard for the last time the call of the gospel but for the vast majority of the people all the teachings of their youth and all the teachings they heard growing up shouted at them in their minds and in their hearts choose

Jehovah turn your backs upon Baal forever Jehovah the God who had led them through the wilderness the God who had clothed them who had fed them and took them into the land of Canaan and threw out all the enemies before them but on the other hand there was the voice of Jezebel Ahab and the Baal worshippers they were going to lose out on it if they chose to follow Jehovah they knew that they would immediately lose the favour of Ahab the king and they hesitated what to do I wonder if you hear voices in your heart and soul tonight similar to that perhaps the voice of a godly father or godly mother who is now at home in glory with

Jesus or you may be hearing the voice of a Sunday school teacher or preacher who has long gone from the scene of time and they join together and they say this choose Jehovah choose to follow Jesus yet on the other hand there is the voice from the pit saying you have plenty of time you haven't tasted yet half of the pleasures that are to be enjoyed in this world these things that the minister is speaking about they're alright for those who are old and cannot do the things you can choose bail and save Jehovah too of course as often as you like as often as you can there's that distinction then made that day on

Carmel but notice secondly the rebuke that was given how long how long are you going to be halting between two opinions the prophet Elijah calls these people to account for the time they have been undecided and the word of God calls you tonight to account for the years the many years that you have spent in this world undecided about the gospel isn't it about time that you decided to follow Jesus Christ there may have been those who were ready to make any excuse that day for their wavering on Carmel oh well we did not have enough time to decide between

Baal and God give us a little more time but that excuse won't do because they have had at least three and a half years of time for three and a half years was the time that they saw the last drop of rain in Israel and it was the judgment of God upon the nation that there was no rain in these years what were they doing during these years were they thinking about the judgment of God on the nation do you recognize that God is speaking to you in the world around you in the affairs of your life and the affairs of other people's lives when death strikes as it has this afternoon itself in the community have you stopped to ask yourself what is

[15:46] God saying to us through this isn't he saying to you be ye also ready you prepare to meet God your time is coming and it's coming soon often we don't put it down to God speaking to us

when things like that happens what's God saying to us as a nation in these days all the squabbling that goes on in Westminster have we ever stopped to say to ourselves is God speaking to me is he saying something through these things I often hear people speaking of someone who has died maybe suddenly by a deadly disease that has spread quickly through his body or by a heart attack as we call it just here one moment and then gone and I hear them saying oh well he didn't get much time to get ready perhaps the man was 60 years old or if it was a woman 60 years old

I know what they mean when they say he didn't get much time to much of a chance to get ready but didn't he get 50 or 60 years to get ready is that not enough time how many times did that person hear the gospel how many times that person could have heard the gospel but chose to sit at home watching the television and going for a walk on the show when the church services went on thousands and thousands and thousands of chances did that person receive how long halt ye says God how long have some of you in this service tonight been halting between two opinions 60 70 80 90 years some have grown gray and white in the hair halting halting between two opinions you used to be taken by hand by your mother to church maybe you remember that tonight going back over the years and you were halting then when you were a young chap you used to be taken here by the hand or to some other congregation now you see your grandchildren as well as your children with you in the church services and they look up to you they look up to their granddad or their granduncle they take you as their example they respect you they love you they run to you and put their arms around you they look up to you as an example for them to follow how much longer are you going to be undecided about

Jesus Christ and about the gospel and young boy or young girl what about you are you going to go on like the older folks that have been undecided for years and years you have seen your friends becoming Christians you have seen maybe your brother or sister begin to follow Jesus how much longer are you going to remain as you are tonight how many more days and weeks and months are you going to remain in sin how many more times will God have to speak to you by the death of someone that you love or by tragedies by sickness and other means oh you say I let some of the sand flow from the time glass of my life and then

I'll decide to follow Jesus listen you may go to the time glass of your life and find that the last remaining sand is just slipping away as you look and then it'll be too late too late one of the hymns I was hoping that we would be singing tonight starts with these words be in time be in time while the voice of Jesus calls you be in time if in sin you longer wait you may find no open gate and your cry will be too late be in time many years ago you may have made a vow that you would follow Jesus and that you would profess him as your Lord and as your saviour openly but you have not kept that promise and the years have gone by and I want you tonight as you sit there in your seat to think of the many blessings that you missed in all these years think of the loss it has been to the cause of Christ that you are undecided until now think of what you could have done for God in the church here on earth you could have been an elder or a deacon or a Sunday school teacher a minister even a missionary overseas in some other land telling people of Jesus and winning souls for Christ rest but most of all think of all the dishonor the dishonor that those years have brought to God that's something to think about the one who deserves your worship deserves your love deserves your adoration and deserves your service how much longer are you going to serve Baal for that's what you're doing saving the evil one what has

[22 : 53] Baal done for you that you should want to save him has he loved you has he wept over you has he suffered and died for you no he hasn't how long the rebuke that was given there's also the foolishness that was exposed stories told about an old man walking along the streets of one of the large cities of our land he was carrying what we call a sandwich board as he approached the people they began to laugh when they read what was written on the sandwich board for the words that were written were these a fool for christ but their sniggers and their sneers soon appeared when they read the words on the other side of the boards who is fool are you according to many gathered at carmel that day and according to many in our own day as well the really wise man is the man who takes everything in moderation a little bit of religion is alright a little bit of church going one end of the day that's more than enough not too much you know and not giving over to too much righteous living keep that in moderation as well that's the wise man according to people nowadays what's wrong with that isn't it better to have a little of both than none at all but

Elijah says it's like a man whose legs are out of joint going to this side now and going to the other side again the words could easily be translated how long do you limp between two opinions the

prophet really was poking fun at them when he said that they were like a bird jumping from one perch to the other in other words the people of Israel were not walking straight with God and there is no peace for the soul in either situation when one is not fully committed to one or the other there is no satisfaction in it no satisfaction no peace of soul in either situation when one is not fully committed you're here tonight and really you're not that happy in the things of the world anymore it's growing to be a bit sour for you not happy with the things of this world that are offered to you and neither are you happy with the things of

God going to church and singing the psalms and the hymns and listening to said ones you see you're not happy because you're not fully committed to Christ and I believe that the devil himself must be laughing at the man who is neither committed to the Lord to the world he'll be having a good laugh because he knows as long as he remain like that he'll have you in the end to be with him listen to king saul as he lay down on the battlefield at gilboa he surveyed his past life his past life came fleeting before him I have played the fool he said will that be your death bed confession I have played the fool I really played the fool bit a mess of my life listen again to the words that we were going to sing this hymn was changed today as well we can sing it well enough we often sing it souls of men why will you scatter like a cloud of frightened sheep foolish hearts why will you wander from a love so through and deep is there a love through and deep in the heart of Baal the heart of the evil one tells you did the evil one lead and die on a cross in your place no he didn't why then follow him why did you follow the one who died the agonising death of

Calvary's cross the psalmist said in Psalm 14 verse 1 the fool has said in his heart there is no God if we are to become wise in the highest sense where are we going to begin well the Bible will keep us right Proverbs says this the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom the foolishness that was exposed and then the challenge that was extended if the Lord be God follow him but if Baal then follow him who was it who made you who was it who was it that sustained you even from your mother's breasts who looked after you all the years of your life until now was it

[29 : 35] Baal or was it God answer it wasn't Baal he couldn't care less what happened to you growing up but God was there who holds your breath in his hand who can stop it any moment that he wills Baal or God God of course when a crisis comes into our lives when death and tragedy strikes will the gods of this world help us will Baal stoop down to listen to us that day at Carmel Baal was put to the test and what happened his prophets cried to him all day oh Baal hear us they cried from morning till noon but there was no voice nor anything that answered and they leaped upon the altar which was made and they cried aloud and they cut themselves after their manner with knives and with lancets and yet after all this devotion and service there was no answer you see the gods of this world money and pleasure and popularity will not answer in the crisis hour will not help us when we really want help when we need peace of conscience and of soul there will be no answer from the gods of this world when we have to face the last enemy death itself then we can cry to the gods of this world but they will not listen and we shall cry in vain and they will leave us to face the dark valley of death on our own the only thing that makes sense whether in life or in death is to lay hold of the one who gave us life even

God the only thing that makes sense is that we cry to him in prayer the only through God the only living God the one who hears and answers prayer he is the God not Baal and therefore we should follow him it is our duty as creatures to follow him he created us to follow him to obey him man's chief end was to glorify God and to enjoy him forever now if you do not think that he is God and if you think that the devil is God then follow him follow the devil if you think that he is God that's what Elijah was saying to the people if

Baal is God then follow him and I don't think that any one of us in here tonight believes that the devil is God why then do so many follow him if he is not God why so few follow the Lord why are there so few on a narrow road that leads to life and to heaven and glory you see Elijah did not say if God is the God of your fathers follow him no what he said was if God is God follow him this is something every one of us has to do for himself or for herself it's no use looking over your shoulder to ask what others are doing you have to be passionate in your response because

God is passionately talking to you tonight in this service he has covenant rights over you he has creator rights over you he has redeemer rights over you what Baal does not have and the gods of this world that was all true about Israel it wasn't Baal who created them and fed them and led them from the bondage of Pharaoh through the barren wilderness for forty years it wasn't Baal who gave them water to drink from a flinty rock it wasn't Baal who fed them with manna in the wilderness so

he has no right over them he has no claim over them now someone may be asking what will I get out of it if I follow him that's not the question you should be asking but this one what will be my lot throughout eternity if I follow

Baal where am I going to spend eternity if I follow Baal I think you know the answer to that and we shall say at the last of our lives the last day of our lives here on earth we say farewell to our loved ones at the bed side if we're fortunate we might be killed on the road or anything but if we have a death bed we'll say farewell to our loved ones they cannot go any further with us than the bed side I'm going to tell you tonight there'll be one standing at the gates of eternity waiting for you and he'll give his servants who served him in this life he'll give them their reward his name is

[36 : 24] Baal the name Paul called him in his letter is sin Romans 6 verse 23 for the wages of sin is death and sin will give you a little package and it will be death and that means being separated from God throughout all eternity eternal death that will mean separation from God and from heaven forever and ever how different from those who follow Jesus but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord the challenge of Elijah that day was similar to the challenge of Moses years before when Israel sinned against God and in Moses absence they made a golden calf and worshipped it we read in

Exodus 32 and 26 Moses then stood in the gate of the camp and said who is on the Lord side let him come unto me and the Levites all gathered together and stood with him but that day at Carmel we read and the people answered him not a word was it because they felt guilty was it because they were afraid to offend Ahab and lose any perks that they had or perhaps it was because they were put to shame and they didn't know how to answer seeing they did not answer Elijah commanded that two sacrifices be prepared but no fire was to be put under the sacrifice that through

God would be the one who would answer by fire and this appealed to the people for Baal was given the opportunity to prove himself they believed that he was the son of God and his followers when they were initiated had to walk through fire and so they say bring it on then let us see and as we know prophets of Baal cried and cried to no avail even here on earth the believers experienced joy unspeakable yet it's only a foretaste of the blessings that await us beyond life but then we see Elijah repairing the altar it was broken down setting the sacrifice in order and crying to

God O Lord God of Abraham Isaac and Israel and the fire of God fell and consumed the sacrifice when the people saw all this they fell on their faces and cried the Lord he is the God the Lord he is the God and this teaches us I think one important lesson in the hardest and in the most difficult and the most bitter experience of life people will not be brought to know God through these things at all you can meet with all sorts of bitter experiences in life but it will not bring the sinner to his senses until God touches him by the Holy Spirit it's when the fire of the Holy Spirit falls that the soul will experience the salvation of

God that soul will remain undecided and unmoved and will die like that and be lost forever and ever unless the fire of God the Holy Spirit touches the lives of men and women but be sure of this be sure of this that those who will not be moved to repent of their sins and believe in God by the fire of the Holy Spirit will one day believe and be fully assured and convinced of the truth of God's word when the fires of God's judgment and wrath will fall but then it will be too late oh I didn't think it was like that well it's too late now it is like that it will be too late for them for the day of grace and the day of mercy will be over forever there will be no doubters at the judgment seat there will be no unbelievers on that day when we all stand before

[41 : 54] God to give account of what we have done with the call of the gospel the distinction that was made the rebuke that was given the foolishness that was exposed and the challenge that was extended if the Lord be God follow him and if fail then follow him may God help us to make the right choice at this moment prayer Lord God our loving heavenly father we pray that there would be even one soul within these walls who would respond and say yes Lord I've waited long enough now I'm coming home open wide your arms of love Lord I'm coming home coming home coming home never more to roam open wide your arms of love

Lord I'm coming home and these arms will embrace you lovingly forever Amen Amen.