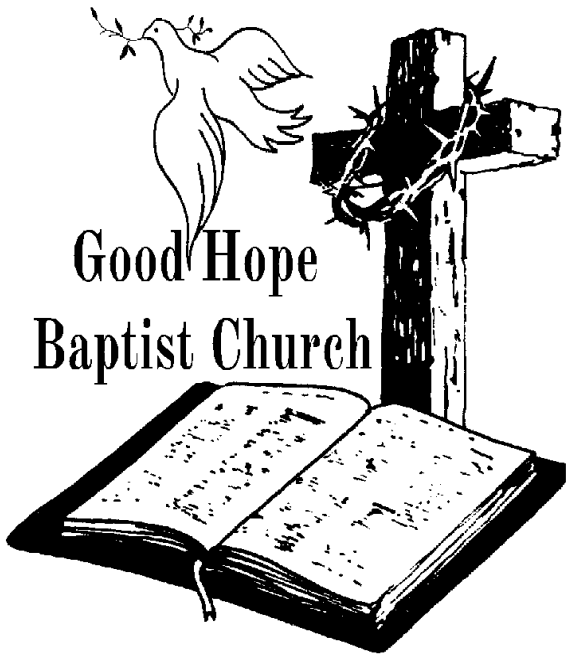
Choose You This Day

1 Kings 18:21



Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Together **1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.**

A few years ago I was reading my favorite part of the newspaper - the Funny Pages. In a little comic strip called *Prickly City* a little girl asks her companion, **"Why does God let bad things happen?"** Her companion answers, **"Why do people insist on doing bad things?"** In the last panel we see the little girl hanging her head and saying, **"I need a world with fewer whys"**.

We all like to ask **"Why did God allow that to happen?"**, but rarely do we acknowledge our part in the bad. It's easier to blame God than it is to blame ourselves. *It's always easier to blame someone else for the mess.*

God's nation is in a mess. Their rulers are godless and evil. When the nation was founded, it was founded by God. It grew from just a handful of godly people who loved the Lord and, against all odds and against everything that all the other nations believed, it not only survived but it flourished.

William Penn, the first great hero of American liberty, and founder of Pennsylvania, said **"Men must be governed by God or ruled by tyrants".**

God's Israel knew their founding. They knew that in their

greatest days their leaders - **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua** - were men who loved the Lord. The nation escaped from Egypt, wandered in the wilderness, crossed the Jordan and moved into Canaan with God at its head. The Pagans and unbelievers fell before them. God had His hand in the writing of their Constitution, and while they followed Him they prospered.

The Bible says that:

Proverbs 14:34 (HCSB) Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

Righteousness *alone* exalts a nation, a people, a family, a person. When a person stands right with God though trials may come, in the end all things will be right. When a person stands wrong with God nothing they do will ever turn out right.

This nation is fallen. Why? Because *moral decay* has taken over. God's people compromised with the world. **King Ahab, contrary to the command of God, married the pagan unbeliever Jezebel**. Jezebel, true to her nature, brought her god Baal into the Temple and spread it throughout the nation.

Materialism has a god, and its name if Baal. Baal is the god of the flesh, the god of self satisfaction. Baal says **"Indulge yourselves, express yourself, please yourself. You are the center of the universe, and no one else matters but you".** Capitalizing on the freedoms that their forefathers won for them through faithfulness, sweat, and blood, the people compromised. They took a little of Yahweh, a little of Christ, and a little of Baal. In time, morality became old fashioned.

The **Ten Commandments became the Ten Suggestions, and morality became not what was true but what was felt to be true.**

At one time God's people drew a lined in the sand and said "This is moral, this is not". The people of God stood with God, for God, and in God. But when God's people compromised, the nation no longer had a conscience. It got darker and darker, and **"the people said not a word"**. Everyone had become accustomed to standing on the sidelines either compromising or complaining.

And then up stepped Elijah. May In say, dearly Beloved, that

1 One man will make a difference if that one man will stand with God. It takes courage to stand up with God, but its always the right thing to do. When you read the context of 1 Kings you find out that for *three years and six months* there has been a drought in the land. The Bible tells us:

James 5:17-18 (HCSB) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours; yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

Elijah was not some superman among Christians. **He**

was a man with a nature just like us. Elijah had something that we all need: *he was committed to God*.

Elijah was a world changer because he *chose* to follow God and God alone. He didn't have a divided heart!

James 1:6-8 (KJV)... ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man [is] unstable in all his ways.

Elijah was not double minded - he was focused on God. It was this man who came before a fallen nation. The Bible says that **Elijah came unto all the people and said ....**

FOCAL 1 Kings 18:21 ... How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. ...

Each person is asked to make a choice. **"If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him".** Do not ride the fence. Now is the time to take sides. Now, not tomorrow. There is no middle ground. The Lord Jesus demands all or nothing. Jesus Christ said:

Matthew 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

You're either with Jesus or you're against Him. You're either standing with Elijah and the people of God, or you're standing with Baal and those Baal has deceived. It must be either, or. It cannot be both. Pick one, and stay with it. No one can stomach a hypocrite! **Lifeway Christian Resources** asked the unchurched why they left the Church. The **major complaints** heard was that the Churched say one thing and do another. Elijah told the people, **"Choose. Be honest and pick a side!"**

ILLUSTRATE The only thing you get by being double minded is confused. I heard a young comedian say one time that when he was young **his momma was a Baptist, and his daddy was a Buddhist**. He said, **"when I grew up, I was only CONFUSED"**. Make a decision - and then go that way. You say **"well, I'll build two altars in my house, one for Jehovah God and the other for Baal - that way all bases will be covered"**. No it won't. God - the True God - won't give you that option. Any preacher worth his salt - any Elijah - will say **"how long will you stumble between TWO OPINIONS"**. Pick one, and stay there.

Illustrate **Choose!** Did we evolve from goo, or are we the work of God's hands? **Choose!** Did God design marriage in Eden and beyond to be one man and one woman, or is it just a "lifestyle preference"? **Choose!** Is that fetus in the mother just a piece of tissue, as easily cut out as an unwanted appendix, or is it a child? Several years ago one of the Senators from Tennessee wrote me and said that **"I am against abortion, except in the case where the woman was raped".** I wrote back, **"Either the fetus is tissue, or it is a child. If its a child then it's murder to abort it no matter how it came to be. Choose!"** As Elijah said, **"If the Lord be God, follow**

Him. If Baal, then follow him. Choose!"

2 One man will make a difference if that one man will stand with God outside of his "comfort zone". Nothing is accomplished in this world while you sit on a couch and watch television. You have to get outside of your comfort zoned to earn money, and have to get outside of your comfort zoned to win a nation back to God. We want to serve God in the "comfort zone".

Illustrate If **Abraham** had never left his family home and went where God sent him, Israel would have never been founded. If **Joseph** had done the "comfortable" and slept with Pharaoh's wife, God would have never put him in a place where he could nurture the family of Israel into a nation. If **Moses**' mother had stayed in the comfort zone, her child would have been aborted, and Israel would never have been saved from Egypt. If **David** had stayed in the comfort zone, Goliath would have never been killed and Israel would have been destroyed by the Philistines. If **Joseph of Nazareth** had stayed in the comfort zone, the virgin Mary and her unborn child would have been stoned to death. If **Jesus** had stayed in the comfort zone both you and I would be looking forward to an eternity burning in everlasting fire.

You will not find *one instance* in Scripture where anyone – even Jesus – stayed in the comfort zone and made any difference.

Those who get off the bench and stand behind the plate are the only ones who even have a chance at hitting a home run! Elijah came to the Palace and confronted King Ahab face to face. We read:

Context **1 Kings 18:17-18 (KJV) ... when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, [Art] thou he that troubleth Israel? 18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.**

Elijah did not mince words, but stood in the presence of Ahab armed with the Word of God. When Ahab tried to blame the nation's woes on him Elijah said, **"I'm not the one troubling this nation. It is you, for YOU are not following God's Word. Not only this, YOU are following Baal, the false god of the Canaanites".**

Listen to me, Beloved. God not only wants you to get off the fence, but He demands you get out of your comfort zone and do what He said do.

The proof of faith is in the <u>following, not in the saying</u>. Elijah said **"If the Lord be God, FOLLOW Him. If Baal, THEN FOLLOW him**".

If you believe in Christ, follow Him. Do what He says, and put God to the test. Elijah stepped out on faith, and asked God to work through him.

On the slopes of Mount Carmel with the beautiful blue sky above, and the drought baked planes of Jezreel below, Elijah challenged the people. **"Pick one, either**

the God Who founded this nation, or Baal." Elijah said:

Context 1 Kings 18:23-24 (KJV) ... give us two bulls; and let {the 450 priests of Baal} **choose one bull for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bull, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. "**

Elijah let the 450 priests of Baal go first. They killed their animal, and laid the pieces on the altar. They danced around that altar, singing and pleading to an idol that is ...

Psalms 115:4-7 (KJV) ... the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

> An idol is a thing of the imagination and no god. A lifeless *lucky rabbit's foot* that was not even lucky when it was on the rabbit.

The Priests of Baal screamed and hollered and cut themselves with knives, slinging blood and doing no good at all. Why would their antics make any difference? An idol is nothing – a foolishness – an invention of man's imagination. Elijah got into the game and began to cry out:

Context 1 Kings 18:27 (KJV) ... mock(ing) **them,** {saying} **Cry aloud: for he [is] a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, [or] peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.**

Elijah mocked them all day long until they were hoarse and exhausted, and lying all about the sacrifice. Idolatry and the worship of gods is the religion of fools. The Bible says that the unbeliever becomes

Romans 1:21-25 ... vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. {22} Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, {23} And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. {24} Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: {25} Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

They change the truth of God into a lie, an idol, a thing of imagination. Elijah believed in God. The Bible tells us that:

Context 1 Kings 18:30-35 (KJV) ... Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the

LORD [that was] broken down. 31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: 32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid [him] on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour [it] on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. 34 And he said, Do [it] the second time. And they did [it] the second time. And he said, Do [it] the third time. And they did [it] the third time. 35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

Elijah did three things *before* he ever went to God in prayer, and wants us to do the same things.

a Elijah glorified God. The Scripture says that Elijah **"repaired the altar of the LORD [that was] broken down"**. Elijah did not make his own altar, but honored God by repairing His altar.

b Elijah recognized God as the Nation's Founder. It is He that made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. God founded Israel, so Elijah had the bull laid out on the altar and *twelve barrels of water* poured over it. Each barrel represented a tribe of Israel.

c Elijah obeyed God's Word. We read:

Context 1 Kings 18:36 (KJV) And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou [art] God in Israel, and [that] I [am] thy servant, and [that] I have done all these things at thy word.

No nation is blessed that does not obey and honor God's Word. No nation is blessed that follows Baal and rejected Jehovah!

God told His people:

Deuteronomy 11:13-17 ... if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, {14} That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain,... {16} Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; {17} And then the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

If the land is desolate, and the drought is here, dear friends it is because as a people we have betrayed our God. God has promised to His people that their obedience would always be rewarded with blessing. We are not being blessed because we are not following God.

As a nation God wants us to turn back to Him, as Israel did, and believe on Him. When Elijah cried out to God, trusting Him, the Scripture says:

Context 1 Kings 18:38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

We want God to *act* though we *do nothing*. God says, **"Act, and I will act. Obey, and I will bless. Do, and I will provide!"**

The late **Dr. Peter Marshall**, Chaplain of the United States Senate (1937-1949) preached back in 1944:

"The old-time evangelists used to stress the tragedy of men and women individually going to hell, but we don't hear very much about that nowadays, because they say *people don't believe in hell, but I notice they talk a lot about it in their conversations.* But today we are living in a time when enough individuals choosing to go to hell will pull the nation down to hell with them. The choices you make in moral and religious questions determine the way America will go. We badly need a prophet who will have the ear of America and who will say, "If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him."

We must decide and decide quickly who is chief, whom we will serve. Millions of people in America live in moral fogs. The issues are not clear to them. They cannot face the light that makes them black or white. They *want grays and neutral tints.* They move in a sort of spiritual twilight. Modified immorality on the basis of cleverness guides millions of people. Modified dishonesty within the letter of the law is the practice of millions more. Surely the time has come, because the hour is late, when we must decide.

The choice before us is plain, Jehovah or Baal. Christ or chaos. Conviction or compromise. Discipline or disintegration.

I have not stated the matter too strongly, you may agree mildly or you may disagree violently, but the time has come for us to face the duties and obligations of our citizenship and willingly to assume the disciplines imposed by the things we believe in, before we are forced to accept the disciplines of tyranny. I for one am tired about hearing about our rights and privileges as American citizens. The time has come, it now is, when we ought to hear about the duties and responsibilities of our citizenship."

Dear friends, this was preached *67 years ago*. The moral standards of our nation were lowered *then*, and no nation makes upward progress when its morality is downward. Jesus Christ said:

Matthew 9:29 (KJV) ... According to your faith be it unto you.

Only when we're led by God will we lead the world. People in America today are open to genuine spirituality, and are open to the Great Commission of Christ. We

need in America today committed men and women who will stand up for what they believe. We need people who - if saved - will live like they are saved. We need Christians who are not ashamed to stand with Christ and say with Him:

John 14:6 (KJV) ... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

You cannot be saved sitting on the fence. Choose! Choose God and choose blessing. Choose Christ and receive salvation. Choose Baal and go to hell! The choice is yours!

Good Hope
Baptist Church

4038 Graham Sherron Road
Wake Forrest, NC 27587

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Proverbs 14:34

1 One man will make a difference _____

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James 5:17-18; James 1:6-8; 1 Kings 18:21; Matthew 12:30

2 One man will make a difference _____

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1 Kings 18:17-18; 1 Kings 18:23-24; Psalms 115:4-7; 1 Kings 18:27; Romans 1:21-25; 1 Kings 18:30-35

a Elijah glorified God. _____

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b Elijah recognized God as the Nation's Founder.

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c Elijah obeyed God's Word. _____

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1 Kings 18:36; Deuteronomy 11:13-17; 1 Kings 18:38; Matthew 9:29; John 14:6