

## **“How Long Will You Falter Between Two Opinions?”**

Following the death of Solomon, “*Israel rebelled against the house of David,*” I Kings 12:19, resulting in a division of the tribes of the children of Israel. The Kingdom of Judah (consisting of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin) and the Kingdom of Israel (consisting of the ten seceding tribes) went their separate ways. Regarding the Kingdom of Israel, each of her 19 kings successively followed the worship of the golden calf, and some of them also served Baal; not one sought to direct the people back to God! Perhaps the worst of her kings was Ahab, who along with his wicked, unscrupulous, vindictive wife, Jezebel, substituted the worship of Baal, slew the prophets of God, and abolished the worship of God. “...and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him,” I Kings 16:23.

Elijah the Tishbite, the courageous, determined, faithful prophet of God, was a “thorn in the flesh” to wicked Ahab. Ahab’s reign had been greatly and adversely affected by the sore famine that came in the land due to Elijah’s prayer that there be neither “*dew nor rain*” and God’s consequent answer to his prayer, which resulted in a cessation of rain “*by the space of three years, and six months,*” I Kings 17:1; James 5:17. Finally, “*after many days,*” God instructed Elijah to “*Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth,*” I Kings 18:1.

Hence, “*Elijah went to present himself to Ahab,*” and upon his arrival, Ahab accused him of being a “*troubler of Israel,*” I Kings 18:17. Elijah, with quick response and characteristic boldness, retorted, saying, “*I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals,*” I Kings 18:18. Elijah then requested Ahab to gather “*the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal,*” and the “*four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table*” to Mount Carmel, I Kings 18:19. And Elijah then “*came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him,’*” I Kings 18:21.

This was a severe rebuke to the children of Israel who had allowed an unscrupulous king to turn them from the worship of Jehovah. They were faltering “*between two opinions.*” Indecision was the order of the day. Conscience demanded fidelity to God, whereas their fear of the King and Queen tempted them to serve Baal. Their indecision resulted in a loss of courage, and even when severely rebuked and questioned by Elijah, they “*answered him not a word,*” I Kings 18:21. Elijah alone had more courage and faith than the entire audience whom he addressed! Is it any wonder, then, that they “went along” with Baal worship? Does not **in**decision between right and wrong nearly always result in a **d**ecision in favor of wrong?

Perhaps their problems were, to some extent, similar to our problems. More learn the truth than **obey** the truth. There are more who intend to obey the gospel than there are who actually **obey** the gospel. Why? They are faltering “*between two opinions.*” On the one hand is God and His word, which beckons them to “take heed.” On the other hand there are the many things they are not ready to give up, plus perhaps a fear of ridicule from others. Consequently, like Felix, they decide to wait for that elusive “*convenient season,*” Acts 24:25.

Sadly, history has a way of repeating itself. In this the gospel age, brethren in the Lord often find themselves faltering “*between two opinions.*” Some “fall away,” and need to be restored, but they seemingly can’t bring themselves around to actually doing the Lord’s will.

They want to go to heaven, but they do not want to give up their besetting sins. Conscience, and the Bible says “repent,” but pride says “not yet.” “I am coming back, and I am going to make things right” is a promise I have heard countless times, but all too often the promise-makers compound their sins by becoming promise breakers and never make correction. What is wrong? The attractions of this “*present world*” mean more to them now than do the future joys of heaven. They are faltering “*between two*” extremes. “I am going to start visiting more — **next year.**” “Some day, I intend to be a better father and husband.” How much we resolve to do — **some day!** Today, our affections are divided, but tomorrow they will be undivided — though we make no changes or improvements today!

Whole congregations are frequently faltering “*between two opinions.*” We intend to have a more fruitful program of work — **some day.** But this takes time and effort, which at present, we must give to something else! We will restore our erring members and “*withdraw,*” 2 Thess. 3:6, from those who refuse to be restored — **some day.** But temptation urges us to “*falter between*” the directions of God’s word and our fear of the disapproval of people. But we should fear **God!** We will “*walk by faith*” and show more interest in the souls of men and women, and make greater sacrifices and commitments to reach these precious souls — **some day.**

Why does everything have to be “some day?” Have we not learned that prompt obedience provides courage and strength to accomplish, with the help of God, what can never be accomplished by people indecisively faltering “*between*” two extremes? Do we not know that “*with God all things are possible,*” Matt. 19:26? Have we failed to grasp the truth of the parable of the talents — that talents properly **used** results in an increase of abilities and opportunities to do good? Matt. 25:14-30. Have we not also learned that procrastination, lack of courage, and indecision results in an increase of difficulties, an increase of fear to do what is right, loss of precious opportunities to do good, and causes irreparable harm?

Dear reader, what will be your reaction to these thoughts? Will you be like the children of Israel to Elijah’s probing question, people who answered him with “*not a word,*” I Kings 18:21? Or will you be like Elijah who took his stand with God? In view of the fact that “*whatsoever thing were written aforetime (i.e., the Old Testament Scriptures) were written for our learning,*” Rom. 15:4, we should herein learn the tragedy of indecision and the value of prompt obedience. Kind reader, are you faltering “*between two opinions?*”

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—Bobby Witherington