

21.5620
LaTAFI

Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Morning, May 30. 1982.

Lesson. 1 Kings 18. vv.7-39.

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. 1 Kings 18. 21.

As many of you will appreciate, there are certain tremendous weights resting on the spirit of the preacher in these dark, lamentable days in the history of Britain, that men should open their arms in the Established Church and perhaps not surprisingly, in a multitude of Free Churches to the Pope of Rome. Undoubtedly this is one of the most solemn things that has taken place in the history of our land for many centuries and we know not what judgments, or if the Lord is merciful what corrections or chastenings God will faithfully impart to our nation. I do take courage from the fact that we have as we believe in Britain, that is England, Scotland and Wales, many gracious, godly people, and the Lord has indicated in His precious Word how He will spare cities and lands for the sake of the few who cry mightily to Him. So according to the mercy, clemency, justice of God in having regard to His remnant according to grace, may we have a hope that we shall be mercifully spared and know what Israel knew on various occasions, what it is to have a blessed, glorious reformation, the cleansing of our hearts, repentance imparted, the Lord forgiving our gross sins, heinous transgressions, and restoring to our land true, vital, spiritual religion, the fear of God, observance of the Lord's Day, the greatest regard for His precious Word, and the observance of His royal law and holy statutes. I would hope by His mercy that there may be a counter-influence and by the goodness of God as we have prayed on a number of occasions, instead of a dimly burning wick among true Protestants the Lord may fan spiritual life into a flame, or where it is not, that He will begin His work to day or shortly. So we pray that this may be counter-productive, with the influence of God resting on the overwhelming events that are taking place now, and which

I suppose hardly any of us anticipated we should live to see, although when Dr Ramsay was Archbishop he did much to encourage this visit and movement.

I have been perplexed as to a subject for to day. The text is as an address to the nation, and I wish it could be. "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" so not only within the confines of the Dicker Chapel, but far and wide it might be an address to the whole nation. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" I propose by the grace of God to give a brief outline of the salient points of the narrative that is before us. Go back to a king of Israel who reigned twenty-two years, and his reign was the most infamous of all the kings of Israel. All of you should know who he is. You have been through the Sunday School and had instruction at home. Ahab. I refer to the very sombre record of Ahab's reign, It is said concerning him that he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him: he completely exceeded the wickedness of all before him. It is an awful record. Two other things relating to him: "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him." It was a mixed marriage, He was married to one of the most wicked of women, an idolatrous woman who worshipped Baal and a woman of tremendous influence and power and determination, and he married that wicked woman. I want to speak very tenderly and also faithfully because it is for life. How it does present a warning, and as we have many dear younger friends with us who we love dearly, and pray for much, how we wish to issue a warning concerning their affinities and friendships, that they may be preserved from friendships with the ungodly, those who conform to idolatry and would be a baneful influence over them all the days of their life. O the solemnity of mixed marriages! So we issue in the Name of God a warning. Watch and be careful as to the attractiveness and presentation and great attainments academically, for one who has been cradled and nurtured in the things of God, and remember though there are times of departure often with young people, when they are old they will not depart from it. So it is almost as a millstone round one's neck to take a step

that results in pain, agony and distress for years, I know, and I must be fair, it is possible to form an affinity with one who appears religious and eventually deteriorates in a solemn way, The dear Lord guide you by prayer and supplication and by divine providence. There are many things that corrupt good manners: all that is evil does. I have watched in this Sanctuary those who I admired for their sober behaviour and I have seen it deteriorate sadly. Instead of being sober some have been a grief to my spirit, and it shows what influence does. It may be the person concerned deteriorates. So see the solemnity of joining in affinity with those who would lead one astray.

It seemed as though Ahab was so wicked he rejoiced to marry Jezebel, and the idolatrous worship of Baal was introduced into Israel, for he reared up an altar to Baal in Samaria. There is a third part to notice concerning his solemn estate. "And Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings that were before him." I must dwell on this for a few moments. We realise there are those things that are grieving to the Spirit and provoke the Holy One of Israel to anger. My friends, we must always remember we have to begin at home, in here, in our own heart. Some people talk of the sins of the nation, never their own. Let us beware and pray fervently to the Lord to be kept by His mighty power from all evil, lest we provoke Him to anger. Anything His pure eyes see that is contrary to His holy law and to the gospel, which He beholds is not to His glory but the glory of the creature, provokes Him to anger. Don't think by the time this service ends you can go and forget it. It is the devil and your wicked heart saying that. You will not forget the anger of God, my friends. So I pause to say it is wonderful that the Lord has preserved us and spared us so far. He has not cut off this nation. As we have said, He has respect to the remnant that love and fear Him and weep between the porch and the altar, and say "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them."

Where shall I go from here? It is wonderful that the Lord ^{was} in Israel one of His blessed, renowned, outstanding prophets, Elijah. Though in himself a mere man, flesh and blood, God gave him supernatural courage to conduct a wonderful test or sign on Carmel to determine the true God before them. There is that which precedes and it must be filled in.

Elijah was a man, as James tells us, of like passions as we are, but he was renowned for his effectual, fervent prayer. Have we still great men and women for prayer? What a favour that is, a team praying, pulling in the same direction. Something mysterious took place; it was an enigma to human sagacity. Elijah went to prayer. He saw the gross wickedness in the land, the worship of Baal, the sun. and Ashtaroth the moon. He saw Israel had gone awhoring after idol gods. That is the state we are in now. The thing is man, fallen man is an idolatrous creature. Your wicked heart loves idolatry; that is why you worship yourself. Did you know it? Self is one of the greatest idols. If you said to me, "I believe I am a well-taught sinner," have you been shown how you worship self? God is cleansing you from worshipping self by the trials you walk in. Is that true? What happened? The force of his prayer directed by God, as he saw His justice and holiness--God deals with sin. He must because He is God--seeing the justice, holiness, majesty of God Elijah prayed earnestly that it might not rain. It was a judgment. I believe we can present it to the dear ones in this way: he saw mercy would never come unless there was judgment. What people want is ~~judgment~~ mercy, not judgment. It is a correction, chastening first, then a sweet taste of mercy. Correction and chastening is in mercy, but that is the order. I believe he ^{when} saw the Lord's Name was vindicated there would be mercy. So he prayed. "As the Lord God of Israel ~~of~~ liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word," not even dew. For three and a half years there was no dew nor rain. You imagine the Sussex countryside and the resultant effect! everything so parched, nothing growing, famine. O these judgments of God! I am concerned with the Lord's own dear people, and I believe the word in Lamentations comes into this. He says, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" It may be you will pass through something for years and see it is God's hand, and you will fall under it by His grace. It is not against you, it is for you. It is solemn to walk it. I put it to you: wouldn't you rather the Lord correct you and know judgment in mercy than be turned into hell? Even if it is five years what is that in comparison with hell? Are you concerned with the glory and honour of God? Is this paramount with you? Does it exceed your earthly comfort? Would you rather

know the chastening of the Lord and that the pain be sanctified to you, then mercy and healing? Think of hell, an everlasting state of torment! Some say this is left out of the vocabulary in religion to day: it is in many cases. It is in the Bible: people are saved or lost. It is awful to be lost. So there were judgments, famine. The time came when the Lord in His rich mercy changed the direction of His dispensations. "And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain on the earth." That is a word for this nation, I hope. Judgments, correction chastening. The people of God will know His chastenings: they are merciful and His corrections. O the sore and solemn judgments of God! So may it be that we in Britain may still sing, if we are spared another decade, of judgment and mercy, judgment and mercy. Elijah met Ahab, who had sought him. He said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" He was trying to blame Elijah! "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. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table Now by the wisdom of God he had a true sign to determine in the whole land who is the true God. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Relevant the text is.

I will make a few observations if it is right to do so, concerning the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope of Rome. As you know, the title Pope, bishop of Rome means, vicar of Christ, so they profess concerning him that he is the greatest representative of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Doesn't it amount to idolatry, to the worship of man? I name another doctrine of the Church, papal infallibility, and their claim is, that this is one of his attributes. It means when he pronounces on matters of doctrine and morals it is impossible for him to err. Will our nation follow this? "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Then concerning the Mass: as you know, the doctrine of transubstantiation means they profess to believe that the bread and wine becomes in a miraculous way the body and blood of Christ. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" We regard the bread and wine as

symbols of His precious death, His broken body and shed blood. So, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Then the idolatrous worship of the virgin Mary, Mariolatry; and connected with this is the doctrine of the immaculate conception—hers: that when she was conceived she was free from all original sin. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" We believe in an immaculate conception: not hers, but of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, therefore the holy thing that was born of her was called the Son of God. "How long, therefore, halt ye between two opinions?" Amen.