

# Elijah Was a Calvinist

by Charles Alexander

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*Elijah's challenge to the people is to make a choice between God and Baal, and to understand the nature of God as a sovereign God who rules and reigns.*

**Duration:** 33:30

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 18:21-22, 1 Kings 18:24-26, 1 Kings 18:40, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Calvinism"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the audience's indecisiveness and urges them to consider the end and make a serious decision. He emphasizes that the path to life is difficult and narrow, and only a few find it. The preacher acknowledges that his own presence in the gathering is a result of God's grace and mercy. He highlights the importance of making a decision and following God, as demonstrated by the prophet Elijah's challenge to the false prophets and King Ahab.

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## Transcript

And there is a word which says in the Bible, and a little child shall lead them. Shall we turn to our text this evening, which you will find in the 18th chapter of the first book of Kings, and verse 21. Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long hold 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. And don't forget too that Elijah was a good Calvinist, but he imposed this great challenge upon his hearers. And there was a great crowd there too.

I don't know how many there were, there might have been thousands there. We do know there were 850 sinners there who could badly do with the work of salvation. It was greatly to be feared that they were past caring or being interested in anything at all that had to do with divine things and truth and righteousness.

They were the 400 prophets of Baal and the 450 prophets of the grove. Or in reverse, 450 belonged to Baal. That was a masculine God.

And 400 belonged to the prophets of the grove. That was a feminine God. The one represented the sun and the other represented the moon, we believe.

But both together represented the vilest, most abominable, cruel, filthy, polluted, contaminated form of religion that the world ever knew. And to have to call upon a crowd of people to choose between that and

the eternal living God is an appalling thought, isn't it, brethren and sisters? Terrible thing that you should even have to ask people to make a choice between extremes like that. How long holds she between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him.

If Baal, then follow Him. And the people answered, another word. It's surprising, you know, what people's substitutes for the name and the glory of the great God and Saviour and Redeemer whom we worship here.

People are ready to worship anything but the true God. And I'll tell you for why. Because they have an appetite for sin.

And they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. It's a good thing that our good Calvinistic prophet Elijah put it this way because it proved all the onus of responsibility for their sins upon themselves and that's where it belongs and nowhere else. The Lord doesn't manufacture sin and put it as a burden upon the souls and consciences of men.

They're sinners because they want to be sinners. Oh, what about Father Adam? Aren't we sinners because he was a sinner? No! You began that way but there's no reason why you should continue. You're sinners now because of your own sin.

Not because of Adam's sin. There's a way out. There's a way through.

There's a way up. There's a way beyond. He's been proclaimed in this country for 15 centuries and more.

And still he's being proclaimed. And his terms are always the same. How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him.

If Baal, then follow him. Well, Baal may usually have it as far as numbers are concerned. But God never was with the big battalions you know.

Be he to go along with a crowd. There was Elijah. He says, Here am I. I am only one witness for God in this place.

And look at the crowd on the other side. You see them, don't you? 850 of them. The prophets of Baal and the prophets of Ashtoreth.

The abomination of the Sidonians. Look at them all there. Would you imagine that God was on their side merely because there was a crowd of them? Some people still judge that way.

They say, oh, look how weak the churches are today. Look how few people go to church. There's nothing in it, you see.

People are rather sensible in these days. We're better educated, more intelligent. Come with us.

There's many fine ships. There are probably more ships wrecked in the space of Dover in a year than anywhere else on the face of the earth. Straight is the gate.

Difficult. Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life. And few there be that find it.

No, God was never on the side of the big battalions. Nor were the big battalions ever on the side of God. On the one hand, many, because it's easy to go downhill.

On the other hand, few. They say, well, it's only by the grace of God that there are even a few. How much we know it.

You wouldn't be in this public tonight if it hadn't been for a remarkable act of sovereign grace and mercy. I was only thinking last night, why me, why me? No different, no better than anybody else, but grace of God somehow or other found me. Grace of God.

Yes, indeed. But the grace of God in its working brought me just to this place. As it may have brought some young fellow or some older person to the same place this evening.

How long halts ye between two opinions? How long is this going to go on? When is there going to be an end to it? Time is marching on rapidly, it's racing on. Running away with your life and with your precious time. And some of us may not have very much time left.

How long, how long is it going on? If you halt between two opinions, isn't it time you gave serious thought to the end? Not just to the way that leads to the end. Some say, well, I don't feel, I'm not one of these people who are morbid. No, neither am I, I never was.

I can say many things to my own discredit, but I don't plead guilty to that. I always was an optimist. I always was full of expectation regarding the future and eagerly stretched forward to the day after tomorrow and its achievements and what awaited.

No, no. The term morbid, you know, often used, very few people can give you the dictionary meaning. Really means disease, disease.

The doctors use it when they say a patient's condition is morbid. You ever say that about you, then you'd better get alarmed and send for the police. And quick.

Oh yes, it means things are getting rather serious. Morbid, disease, disease. Death's cold fingers closing round your vital organs perhaps.

No. When it's applied to the mind, it means a diseased mind. It means always looking on the black side.

Always thinking that the worst is going to happen to people. It's all they say. Oh, religion is the thing for morbid minds.

People who are concerned about their future. But to be concerned about the future is not the sign of morbidity. There are some young fellows in this congregation this evening, they're not concerned.

Or shall I put it the other way? They are concerned about the future, but they're not morbid. They're eagerly looking forward to the future. The life of usefulness.

I think too of cleanliness and godliness. I'd like to say there are some young women too, we've got many young women, haven't we? Ladies, you have to do something about it. You can't have a crowd of handsome young fellows sitting round in these comfortable chairs with no young ladies to keep them company.

If you don't find them here, they'll find them outside and they might be sorry afterward. You know, we've got young men here. I'd like to say we've got young ladies here too, who are looking ahead and they're concerned about the future.

They're thinking very seriously about it, but they're not morbid. No, no. They want to be useful, they want to achieve something, they want to get somewhere.

Why not? Why not? The people who are really morbid, you know, are those people who sit still and say, oh, I don't really bother about religion or anything else. And the real reason is because they're not capable of a serious thought. You know, it takes a moment.

It takes some movement amongst the grey matter to get really serious and earnest about anything, especially if it's about your soul, a state about your soul. Some of us have got some hard thinking to do, you know. Some of us may have something behind, something to be ashamed of.

How long halt ye between two opinions? The Lord be God, follow him. If Baal, then follow him. Some say he's our Calvinistic prophet.

Because you see, with all his Calvinism, he wasn't a hyper-Calvinist. He was a true Calvinist. That is, in case you don't know what a Calvinist is, it's a term which has been employed during this last four centuries or more to describe those kind of Christian believers who believe in a sovereign God who rules and reigns.

You say, don't all Christians believe that? No, not by a long way. If you spoke to them like that, they would say, oh yes, of course, I believe that God is sovereign, whatever that means. I believe he reigns in the heavens.

Ah, but it's a bit more than that, isn't it? It's a God who has his way. I wouldn't like to live in a creation, would you? Where either there was no God or we had a weak God who didn't know where things were going and didn't have his way. He sat back and just watched events and opened a big day-to-day diary to enter in what happens today in the universe, what happens tomorrow, and looks it up from time to time to see how things are going.

Oh no, God is in every day, in every breath we draw, in every petal of yonder rose there. Couldn't get like that unless there was a star. That flew down yonder.

Yes, he knows what he's doing. All times are in his hand. Your times are in his hand too.

And I don't know how God works his sovereign will. I don't know how he gets his way. I'm one of those who believe that he does.

I'm also one of those who feels rather modest about it and says, well, that's what I believe. But I don't know how. I don't know how he retains in his vast wisdom that element of responsibility which belongs to you and to me with all our decisions, whether for time or for eternity.

I don't know how that works in. But I do know that he sent his servant on this day and he cried to all and sundry to the 850 false prophets who were there with their false religion and to all the vast crowd of people and to the king Ahab sitting there in all his robes and all his glory and said to them all, one and all, they were all the same size and shape in the sight of God. How long halts ye between two opinions? Make up your minds what you're going to do.

And make up your minds now, make it up today. If the Lord be God, follow him. If Baal, then follow him.

And the people answered him, not a word. My very belief that in some form or another that day, like that day at Mount Carmel, that never to be forgotten day in the history of the world, that day comes to you and

to me. It might be your day now.

Who knows? God alone knows tomorrow. Tomorrow doesn't belong to you. You've got today.

You've got now. You haven't got anything else. You've lost the past.

The future doesn't belong. It's now that's your present possession. You may never see tomorrow.

You may never survive tomorrow. A thousand people have died. No, what is it? A hundred thousand of people have died or will die since you came to this meeting tonight and before you pass out when the service is ended.

It happens like that in the world. A hundred thousand an hour are passing into eternity. And there are all people like that.

Some of them are very old. Some of them are very, very young and tender. Others of them are depicted in between.

You haven't got tomorrow. Only today belongs to you and all its decisions. And time is precious.

It's golden. It's more precious than money. Money changes its value but time is always precious.

Money is slipping away because of the follies of governments. Clever fellows who call themselves economists who've had it their own way for years and years and years and have encouraged governments and they didn't need much encouragement either to spend more money than they had and that the easiest way of spending money that you haven't got is to forge money. Nobody forges money in this country hardly except the government.

Not just this government, the past government and the one before that and going right back into the dim shadows of the early part of this century. The government is the greatest forger of money that this country knows because when it's short of cash it sends a note down to the printer and says print more pound notes. Print 5 pound notes, print 20 pound notes print 100 pound notes then there are thousands upon thousands more in order we may balance our budgets.

At the end of the day there's a day of reckoning because as I've told you again and again the more money you print the less it is worth. We used to laugh at the people out in Papua who were still in the stone age culture. The only currency they know are stones what the Scots called chuckie stones you know.

We used to call them in Liverpool duck stones you know what they are, cobbles. And they pass these from hand to hand that's their currency. That's their cash.

I don't know how they do it I don't know how they make that a denomination or a sign of what but we laugh at them using duck stones, cobble stones for money can't tell you something that's more ludicrous than that and not using pieces of paper for money and that's what we do. And we're supposed to be wise aren't we? Supposed to be wise. We need to become fools that we might be wise we might learn sense.

Oh what fools men are all these grand economists London School of Economics and all the rest of it all learning the same alphabet all learning the same tomfoolery about how to manage the finances of a country. It's catching up on us isn't it? The follies of mankind. I have no faith in them I don't know whether you have but I don't.

Not the slightest. Not any of them. No not of any party.

I'm one of those men that's getting a wee bit cynical about political parties and all that kind of thing. I've seen too much of it in my lifetime. All they're posting, all they're going to do and this is what it is, this is it.

With any money in your pocket turning into dust getting more and more worthless. Well I don't know how God manages his affairs. I don't know how he holds men responsible for their decisions.

But I know that he is sovereign. And I know that if it wasn't that he was sovereign there would be no way out and there would be no way through at all. But he has made a way.

Made a way but you've got to make up your mind. You've got to decide. Yes you have.

Elijah says so, in Good Calvary he says make up your mind. Don't part any longer between two opinions. You've got this choice, you've got that choice.

You've either got Baal or you've got God. You can't have both and you can't have neither. You've got to choose between one or the other.

It's just as essential as the breath you draw. Because that's the kind of world we live in. And you cannot excuse yourself for making a choice.

You cannot say, well I don't feel obliged to make any choice I'm just going on as I am. You can't, you see. You can't go on as you're doing.

You'll be arrested by events over which you've no control. It may be very, very disastrous too. You cannot escape by any manner of means or argument at all you cannot escape this all essential choice between two opinions.

You've got to make up your mind. You've got to give an answer to God or to God's prophets. Some people try to get out of it by saying oh well, it didn't really happen, you know this is only a story.

But then who believes that fire comes down from heaven burns up the sacrifices and just when a man starts praying fire from heaven who ever heard of it? Well I've not only heard of it but I've seen it, dear friend. I was on the shores of a Scottish loch all by myself, all by my little self in a very uncomfortable back seat of a car my own car wrapping myself round with blankets and cushions and trying to keep warm and comfortable because I was there for the night and the heavens opened and the fire came down and the water came down too, never mind the fire I never saw water come down like it. And it came down for about the best part of an hour I never saw such a, or heard or experienced such a thunderstorm as that was.

By the car in which I was was rocking through and through and there was a tremendous wind got up and it was sweeping over the loch and you couldn't see 20 yards ahead for the solid downpour of rain illuminated by tremendous flashes of lightning Oh yes, I've seen the fire fall from heaven it often happens. Oh, it was just a wee bit afraid it might hit me, you know on its way down.

Well I knew I was perfectly safe inside the car there was no safer place than a car and some of our scientific friends will tell me why, I know somebody did some time ago they described how the electricity the spark, the fire which comes down from heaven when it strikes the roof of your car it spreads and goes down harmlessly into the ground never gets inside somewhere other I don't know how it is a scientist who told me that I felt rather comforted ever since safest place you can be that and your own home well of

course then we feel a bit nervous and I assure you that I don't like being outside in a thunderstorm I like to be under cover because you never know when it's going to strike but if my faith was a little bit stronger I would say well, what matters is I will take such precautions

as I can but the Lord who controls the fire knows where it's going to fall it fell right at the very spot where it was most needed in the days of Elijah it didn't fall on the unburnt sacrifice that the prophets of Baal had been trying to offer up and had been crying to their God all day long Oh Baal hear us, Oh Baal hear us and Elijah gave them a theological lesson about how to get on with false gods because you see people have just precisely this idea of God that the prophets of Baal had and so Elijah came right down to their level he says your God you know that you believe in is just, you've made him out of yourself you've made your own God and he looks awfully like you are like you're looking and so he says cry aloud and he's talking with somebody or he's pursuing so maybe he's

watching a football match or he's sailing a yacht or he's playing crickets he's talking, he's pursuing he's on a journey, he's had adventures he's fallen asleep if you shout loud enough you'll waken up your God Elijah you know was not just being sarcastic there was every room for sarcasm and every excuse for sarcasm in the situation but he was not being merely sarcastic no no he was saying I'm just taking your God on the level on which you put him and there are a good many people in Christian England today and their God is just like that oh yes they say they believe in God all right he's just a God of convenience he doesn't seem to be at his post very long no I pray and I don't get any answers no of course not, there are some prayers that would be beneath the dignity of deity to listen to

and to answer no no but if your need is real if your desire is for the will of God to be done you will not cry in vain that's how the Lord who was God taught us he said this is one of our first petitions thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven don't just give me this, don't just give me that the first thing that comes into my mind I'd like this, I'd like that whether it's good for me or not but give me this day my daily bread that's good, you hear that because that's necessity forgive my sins yes says the Lord go on, go on, don't just stop there oh I thought I had to stop there oh no no no forgive me my sins now there's something else says the Lord oh yes I remember as I forgive those who sin against me who do me wrong oh that's hard Lord yes says the Lord it was hard for me too to

forgive your sins very hard it cost me my life and my glory on the cross of shame it's hard to forgive sins you know hard to forgive sins the Lord went that way there was no other way because it's a hard road some people have to revise their views of who God is and what he's like and Elijah wanted them to know if the Lord is God follow him if Baal then follow him but I'm telling you what kind of a God he is it's best that you should know fire coming down from heaven did you know that God was always sending fire down from heaven oh I was going to tell you wasn't I it hit the right place it always does, God's fire never misses, always on the target singles out out of a multitude just one man if need be this time it was the his own altar with a brick slain upon it but no fire under it

everything ready for the kindling and soaked with water, twelve barrels of them one barrel for every tribe of the children of Israel and the altar was constructed of twelve stones one for each tribe of the children of Israel Elijah knew what he was doing you know he knew indeed and there was the bullock the type of Christ upon the cross the slain man oh Lord send fire from heaven and down it came in one mighty blast and strain and right upon the target it struck the altar and the bullock everything was ablaze of appalling fire the people cried out and shouted the Lord he is the God the Lord he is the God and the lightnings in the throne of heaven the divine wrath against Satan came on that day when outside the city wall one hung

and suffered upon the tree and on fiery darts of the divine

indignation against sin found their target upon one man hanging upon the cross and all heaven shuddered at the sight of the very throne of God's sheep for there was no other way by which God could save my soul and by enduring that blast from heaven from his own throne directed by his own hand towards his own Son who was God manifest in the flesh have you made up your mind yet? young man or old person some of you who are tumbling on the brink of the grave in the shadows of autumn we're getting very very long in your pathway how long is it going to be? before you make up your mind before you make your choice before you make your decision whether it is the Lord or whether it is Baal look at the Lord make a comparison between the God of this world and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son I don't know where the wound was so poignant when it was on the one who hung and suffered there in the heart of the Eternal Father who thus had to turn his hand against the victim who is his own Son that there might be forgiveness of sin a hard thing is forgiveness that you may have it now it's yours, it's yours belongs to you if now in your heart you will say the Lord he is the God and I am his from this moment and he is mine forever and forever Amen we close by saying 949 that's right 949 we give thee but thine own whate'er the gift may be all that we have is thine alone our trust, O Lord, from thee and what a wonderful tune we have to this again we are in debt to the late Sir Arthur Sullivan and again we notice he starts

the last chord in the same way and so many of his tunes in four equal notes in the first bar so here we give thee but thine own Thank you

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