

## Chapter One

# THE PERIL OF INDECISION

I would like to share with you a report which came from London, England, recently. I am quoting from the *Christian Inquirer*, Buffalo, New York. "A widespread revival of religion in all classes of society is on its way, according to Prof. Daniel Bell, an American sociologist who is on sabbatical leave in Britain from Harvard University..." the article reported. He further said the revival will be marked by "simple pieties:" a deep sense of community and concern for fellow man and the environment. He made comparison between the old line denominations and the fundamentalist churches. He said, "In the United States in recent years the largest growing voluntary associations have been the fundamentalist churches. To some extent this is an aggressive reaction on the part of the 'silent majority', so to speak, against the carryover of modernist impulses into policies, especially the claims of complete personal freedom in sexual area (for example, gay rights), morals, abortion and the like..."

Well, praise the Lord, my friend, at last we are beginning to feel something of the winds of revival before the end. Though they may be beginning to blow ever so softly, perchance God will move again in a great blast of revival before the end. The prophet many years ago said, "Break up your fallow ground. It is time to seek the Lord!"

Yes, praise the Lord! The cross of Jesus Christ is still that effective place where men can lose their sins and find the Saviour. We are interested in promoting the revival movement.

Praise God! If revival comes, it will come because of the great and wonderful grace of God. God's grace super abounds and whenever God's people turn, just ever so slightly, to Him, He is ready to respond in love and mercy and to extend to them forgiving grace.

Revival can only come when people come to the point of decision, personal decision which changes lives. What happens when people are on the point of decision is illustrated in this Scripture portion from **I Kings 18:17-40**:

*And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*

*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.*

*So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.*

*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.*

*Then said Elijah unto the people I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.*

*Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them chose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:*

*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.*

*And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.*

*And they took the bullock which was given them and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.*

*And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, 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.*

*And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.*

*And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.*

*And 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.*

*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:*

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

*And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.*

*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.*

*Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.*

*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.*

*And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is the God.*

*And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*

The days of King Ahab were dreary days in Israel. Everything looked gray. There were no clear distinctions. The law of the Lord had been ignored. People went their own way and did their own thing. Imperceptibly some shading had taken place and Ahab brought to his palace the wicked queen Jezebel. The idols of Baal were everywhere present.

God had one lone man who understood the tragedy of the hour. He it was that called the people of Israel to make a decision. He saw **THE PERIL OF INDECISION**. He said to them when they gathered, “How long halt ye between two opinions?

Elijah’s experience with the people and the prophets of Baal clarifies the ISSUES involved in the peril of indecision which all of us must pay attention to. I call you to consider

## I. The Call for Decision

Elijah brought them together. It was his suggestion to the king that all the people and the prophets of Baal be brought together. Then when they came, he addressed them in no uncertain terms. He said to them, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”

Why do you always mix things up so you can’t tell the difference anymore? There are, in fact, Elijah said, two positions to take. Take

one or the other. Don't be all the time straddling the fence. Don't be all the time riding in the middle. Make a decision. There are two loyalties. Either you serve Jehovah God or you serve Baal. Why do you want to mix these two together and make it look desirable?

Friend, I want to tell you that the present political economic crises in our countries partake of much the same that the people of Israel experienced in the days of Elijah and King Ahab. But Elijah had a solution. He called the people to decision. He made a proposal. He said, "They are many and I am one. But let us decide to do like this: let them give us two bullocks—one for them and one for me. Then we will prepare these sacrifices and the God who answers by fire, let Him be God." And they all agreed to it.

Now observe that there were two forces: four hundred and fifty prophets against one. That looks like a serious imbalance, doesn't it?

There were two sacrifices, one animal for each.

God is calling you in the word of the prophet to a point of decision. He hates indecision. He despises lukewarmness. When Jesus spoke to the church at Laodicea in the last book of the Bible, He said, "because you are lukewarm I will spew you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:16) My friend, it is time to make a decision, either to serve the Lord or to serve Baal. As the people of Israel, so are we. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How long are you going to keep stirring things together and trying to make them desirable between the Lord and your idol? How long are you going to keep on doing that? God despises indecision. It is a call for decision the prophet Elijah brought to the children of Israel. It is a call to decision that I bring to you on this program.

But Elijah had also

## II. The Concern for Devotion

Did you notice how these prophets of Baal frenziedly called upon their idol who could not hear nor respond? Isn't verse 29 tremendous? "There was neither voice, nor any answer, nor any that regarded." Elijah had a concern for devotion. He went to the altar that was

broken down. He repaired it. Oh, what an awful fact is neglect. It is like a sneaking thief. It takes away from you the best in life and replaces it with a broken altar and a god that cannot see, hear, or do.

But Elijah had a concern for devotion. He went to the broken altar and repaired it. He chose twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob (unto whom the word of the Lord came) and he rebuilt that altar. He prepared it for the tremendous demonstration. He had a concern for the devotion that puts God in His rightful place. God is grieved with broken altars.

I wonder, how about you? How about your altar? Is it broken down? I have been impressed at times while traveling through the lands of the Bible, to see the ruins of Byzantine churches. There they are in ruin. Nobody has bothered to repair them. They are mute testimonies of what had once been.

I want you to see that the prophet had a concern for devotion; he would leave out nobody. So he chose twelve stones according to the twelve tribes of Israel and began to repair that altar. God had spoken to them, wanted to bring them all back again to understand the will of God; to walk in His truth; to obey His statutes and keep His commandments. It was therefore necessary that the altar be rebuilt, that it be established for them that their devotion could take place, that their worship could happen.

After the altar was built then more could happen. It is important, my friend, for your altar of devotion to be repaired. But be sure you repair it in the Name of Jehovah. Don't leave anything out. Do it well. Do it carefully. What happens if we offer at the wrong altar? Nothing happens. There is no voice nor any to answer nor regard. It must be the altar of God. How is it then with you, my friend? Have you forsaken and neglected the altar of God? You must, therefore, repair it. Build it again and get it ready for the moment of divine vindication.

Then the prophet had

### III. The Commitment of Determination

I want you to see him going about his preparation. It was the time

of the evening sacrifice. It was the time when a sacrifice was normally made at the temple on the brazen altar. He prepared it; laid the wood in order; he cut the animal in pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said, "Fill four containers of water and put it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." They did it once; they did it twice; they did it three times. Elijah was not satisfied until everything was done properly according to his instructions. Now note again the wood, the bullock and the water: the preparation for this wonderful demonstration of divine power which they had agreed upon. The God who answers by fire, he will be God.

Now examine the prophet's prayer. It's very simple. At the time of the evening sacrifice, the prophet Elijah came near and prayed: "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. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

Examine that prayer and you will find the prophet addresses God as the Eternal One; The Sovereign God at whose word he had done all these things. We see in this prayer the merciful God because He turned their hearts back again. It is a very simple prayer but it gets right to the heart of the matter. It gets to the heart of the revival.

And we are informed that the fire of God fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice: the wood, the stones, the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. What a tremendous demonstration of the might and power of God. It could not have happened had not the prophet had the commitment of determination.

But that is not all. There was the preparation, the prayer, and then the purging. When the people responded so completely, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" then Elijah said, "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape." And they took them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them there.

When revival truly comes there will be a purging. Not only will there be a decision but there will be a purging, a thoroughness, a getting rid of those things that have been detractive and have drawn people away from God. I admire Elijah for his strength, don't you?

God despises weakness. He doesn't like people who have no decision, who can't stand for what they know is right.

It was the great leader Joshua as he brought the children of Israel into Canaan many years before Elijah who called them together and said "Choose you this day whom ye will serve. As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15) That is the kind of people God likes. That is the kind of people He can use: People who know where they are and where they are going.

The peril of indecision. We are so reluctant to take our stand because it will cost us too much. We are not willing to stand out for God because we will be a rebuke to all the unholiness around us.

My dear friend, somebody must stand with Elijah who issued a call for decision. We can't be flipping between two decisions constantly. We can't be halting between these two decisions. We must make our decision: is it God or is it Baal?

God is waiting for someone to lead in the concern for devotion; to prepare the altar. Get back there where God wants you, where God met you before. Do it in the Name of the LORD God of Israel.

God is waiting for someone to demonstrate the commitment of determination, to go all the way and not keep back anything.

That is how revival comes, and that is how it will come in our generation as surely as it came in the days of Elijah the prophet.

Are you going to be the one in your community who will stand with Elijah or are you going to stand with the prophets of Baal? How long halt ye between two opinions?

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hear me, O Lord, hear me. We need a revival in this country as we have never needed one. We need a revival around the world, Lord, as we have never needed one. We pray Thee in the precious Name of Jesus, pour out Thy Spirit upon Thy people. May there be great decisions made for Jehovah, the LORD God of Israel. May many make a clean sweep, a thorough purging, with determination to follow God for He is God. For this we thank Thee in Jesus' Name, Amen.



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