



A NATION AT THE CROSSROADS

“How long halt ye between two opinions?”

1 Kings 18:21

BILLY GRAHAM

Portland Crusade, Portland, Oregon

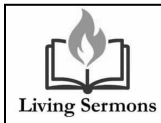
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A NATION AT THE CROSSROADS

Preacher: Billy Graham

Publisher: LivingSermons.com

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Foreword

Every generation arrives at a mountain of its own. Sooner or later the noise of competing voices falls quiet, the crowd stops shouting, and a single question remains for each of us to answer: Whom will I serve?

In this classic message, Billy Graham takes us to Mount Carmel, where one prophet stood before a divided nation and asked it a question that has never expired: “How long halt ye between two opinions?” The setting is ancient, but the pressure Elijah faced is entirely familiar—the pull of the fashionable, the fear of standing out, and the quiet hope that we can serve God and the idols of the age at the same time.

What makes this sermon endure is its clarity. It does not hide behind complicated language. It sets before the listener a real choice, tells the truth about its cost, and then does what a faithful preacher must do: it points to the One who satisfies the longing no success, wealth or power can fill, and it invites a response.

As the editor of this edition, I have kept the message exactly as it was preached. The words, the illustrations and the appeals are the preacher’s own. My work has been to prepare the transcript for the page: correcting spelling and punctuation, removing the music and broadcast cues, and dividing the message into chapters and subheadings so that the movement of the sermon—from the prophet’s appearance, to the contest on the mountain, to the personal call—can be followed, studied and returned to.

You may read this book in a single sitting or take a chapter at a time. You may use it for private devotion, for a small group, or to place in the hands of someone who is still undecided. However you use it, read slowly, keep your Bible open to 1 Kings 18, and allow the question of the prophet to become the question of your own heart.

May you not only read about the fire that fell on Carmel, but meet the living God who answers.

Wisdom Epsi
— The Chief Editor, *LivingSermons.com*

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Publisher's Note

This book is a faithful transcript of a live sermon delivered by the preacher under the inspiration and unction of the Holy Spirit. Every effort has been made to preserve the preacher's exact words, tone, flow, and spiritual authority, while carefully proofreading and formatting the message into a clear and readable ebook format.

The message you are about to read was originally ministered in a live congregational setting. As such, it carries the weight, urgency, and atmosphere of that sacred gathering. Minor grammatical and structural adjustments have been made solely to enhance readability, without altering the substance, intent, or power of the original delivery.

[Watch the live sermon](#) from which this message was transcribed on YouTube

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Our standard is reverence for the Word of God. Our daily goal is to transform powerful live sermons into polished PDF and ebook editions for the edification of the Body of Christ. It is our prayer that as you read, the same grace, conviction, clarity, and impartation present in the live service will minister to you afresh.

— *Livingsermons.com*

A Spirit-led Publishing Stewardship

Main Message

Begins Here

Introduction

Our Text Tonight

Tonight I want you to turn with me to 1 Kings, the eighteenth chapter, in the Old Testament.

First Kings 18 is one of the most dramatic stories in all the Bible. In verse 21 we read:

“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 Prophet in Israel’s Darkest Hour

Elijah is the most remarkable character, to me, in all the Old Testament.

I like to read about him. He is mentioned thirty times in the New Testament, and when Jesus Christ went to the Mount of Transfiguration there were two men there with Him: Elijah and Moses.

So we know that hundreds of years after Elijah had died, or had been taken to heaven, he came back. We know that he was living and that he was talking, because he was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

But here, in his life story, he suddenly appears at the darkest moment of Israel's history.

A Throne Corrupted: Ahab, Jezebel and Baal

A Nation So Low

Never had the nation gone so low—morally, spiritually, militarily, economically—as it was at this hour. The nation was struggling for its very existence, and out of nowhere there came this rugged, strong, craggy, young, long-haired, sun-tanned son of the desert: Elijah.

He suddenly announced his presence to the people. Elijah is here, and the king trembled on his throne, because Elijah came in the power and the anointing of the Spirit of God.

One Man and God

It used to be said that Mary, Queen of Scots, was more afraid of the prayers of John Knox, one preacher, than she was of all the armies of England. One man and God constitute a majority anywhere.

Elijah was a mighty prophet of the Lord.

Ahab and Jezebel

What had happened in Israel, that Israel should go down so rapidly, was that a very wicked man had come to the throne. His name was Ahab, and the Bible says he did more evil than any other king that had ever preceded him.

And then he did something else. He married a woman from one of the heathen nations, which was against ancient Israeli law. He married Jezebel, and she worshipped Baal. She did not believe in the God of ancient Israel. She did not believe in the God of Moses. She did not believe in the God of Abraham.

The Worship of Baal

She believed in Baal, and Baal was one of the worst forms of worship that we have ever known—filled with sensuality, sex orgies, human sacrifice and all the rest.

And this is a very interesting thing: in a time when people turn away from the true God, many times you will find that they put sex, violence and their religion together. We are

seeing indications of that in America with the rise of Satan worship and the occult, the emphasis on sex, the emphasis on violence.

Put them together, and you have something the Bible says that God abhors, and God will judge, and the wrath of God will fall on that people.

The Challenge on Mount Carmel

That was the situation when Elijah appeared on the scene. And the first thing Elijah did was to protest—except that Elijah was almost alone. He thought he was alone, but God told him later that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Elijah said to the king, “All right, here is what I want you to do. I want you to gather all the prophets of Baal, who believe in idolatry and lead idolatry in this country. I want you to gather them at Mount Carmel, which looks out over the Mediterranean Sea. I will come up there, and we will let all the people come and watch, and we will have a contest. I will debate the 450 prophets of Baal publicly, and let the people decide who is God.”

And the king said, “All right.” So all the people gathered—thousands of people on Mount Carmel—and the 400 prophets of Baal.

The God Who Answers by Fire

Elijah was standing for God alone. He was just one man, one solitary prophet, standing there all by himself.

He said, “Here is what I want you to do. I want you to get two bulls. Build two altars. You call on your god, Baal. I will call on my God, the true and the living God, and we will see who answers by fire.”

They said, “All right.” So they built their altar. They cut their bullock up and laid it on the altar, thousands of people watching, and then they began to call on Baal.

When Baal Could Not Answer

They said, “O Baal, Baal, Baal, Baal, answer by fire. We know you are the true god.” And nothing happened. Elijah stood there and laughed at them. It is one of the most humorous things in all the Bible. He said, “Go ahead, yell. Maybe your god is on a trip somewhere.”

From morning until noon they screamed, and they yelled, and they cried, and they prayed. Then they began to cut themselves until blood was gushing out all over the place, trying to get Baal to answer. But, of course, Baal could not answer.

The Fire Falls

Then Elijah said, “All right, it is time for me to take over. Build the altar.” And they built the altar and put the bullock on it. He said, “Now I want you to get twelve barrels of water and pour it on top. Dig a trench around it, fill that with water, and everything is soaking wet.”

Then Elijah called upon God, and the fire came down from heaven and burned up the bullock, and burned up the altar, and burned up the whole thing.

And the people said, “We believe in the Lord God who has answered by fire.” And Elijah won the day and left Mount Carmel victorious over the false prophets of Baal.

Who Was There

I want you to notice who was there. Three groups of people. One group: one man, Elijah. On the other side, 450 prophets of Baal, all experts in religion, philosophy and psychology. And out in between were the vast mass of people who were not sure.

The Uncommitted Crowd

They were uncommitted. They were not sure whether Baal was god. They were not sure whether Elijah's God was God. Their ancient traditions made them want to believe in Jehovah. Their interest, though, was in pleasing the king and being relevant and being “in.” They did not want to be old-fashioned and traditionalist and out of step. They did not want to be caught believing in the Ten Commandments if that was not the “in” thing.

You see, men have always been sort of faddish. We go after fads. That is true in every generation. And the “in” thing at that moment was to believe in Baal, with all the freedom of sex and sensuality and the orgies.

The Sacrifice of Their Children

Now, they did not like the human sacrifice, but all religion demands some sort of sacrifice. So what they would do, many times, was take their babies—a chosen baby—and put him in the hands of this great god, and the baby would be burned up. They gave their babies as human sacrifices. That was Baal worship.

Secret Followers Who Were Afraid

But then there were many who were secret followers of the true God. They did not believe all that hocus-pocus about Baal. They had a guilty feeling about it, but they were afraid. They were afraid of standing up for God, afraid of standing up for what they believed to be truth, so they did not take a stand publicly.

You see, Jesus demands a public stand. That is why I ask people to come forward. He demands a public stand. You cannot be a secret follower of Jesus and please Him. He said if you are not willing to take your stand publicly and openly, He will not take His stand openly for you in heaven—and without the intercession of Jesus Christ, none of us would ever make it.

Make a Decision

Then Elijah said something to all these people: “If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”

He said, “Make a decision.” God is not going to allow you to have an altar to Baal in your home—an altar to materialism in your home—and then go to church on Sunday and think that is going to do it. You have got to come all out for Jesus Christ. He must be first and Lord in every area of your life if you are to be acceptable to God.

The Empty Promise of Success

A Film Star's Disillusionment

Now the people had seen the evidence. They knew Baal could not give them peace and joy and happiness. They knew that.

One of our most famous film stars said the other day—I will not call her name—but she was quoted in one of the magazines saying this: “I was the victim of the American Dream. I was brought up to believe that when I found success, I would automatically be terribly happy. We were all taught that. Well, I got the success. I had spent twenty-one years believing that as soon as all these wonderful things happened to me, all my troubles would vanish. Well, they didn't. It was a big disillusionment,” she said. And she is only twenty-one now.

Twenty-one years thinking that if she made it on television, and was famous on television and famous in motion pictures around the world, she would be happy—but she said, “It has been a big disillusionment.” You see, Baal cannot bring inner peace and satisfaction to the human heart.

Happiness Is in God

Pascal once said it—the great scientist—he said, “Happiness is neither within us nor without us. It is in God, and only when God is in us is happiness within us and without us.” How true that is. Happiness and peace and joy come in knowing God.

Baal could not answer their deepest needs, their great philosophical questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Baal gave them no answers. Neither does capitalism, and materialism, and secularism, and humanism.

Made for God

It is found only in a relationship with God. You see, you were made for God. Made in God's image. Made for fellowship with God. And you can try all your life, in a thousand different directions, to find that certain something, and you will never find it.

I have seen men strive to become the most brilliant scientists, and I know some of the most brilliant scientists in America who are miserable.

I have seen men spend their lifetime making money, and I know some of the richest men in America, and I know how miserable some of them are.

I have seen men strive all their lives to obtain political power, and they get political power. They get the office they were seeking, but it does not bring the peace and the joy and the happiness and the fulfillment they thought it would.

But here is an interesting thing: I have never seen a person give their life to Jesus Christ sincerely but that they found what they were looking for. He satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts and of our lives.

Two Ways, Two Masters, Two Destinies

You Must Make a Choice

Now Elijah taught us one thing, and Jesus teaches it too: you must make a choice. You have a will of your own, and you have to decide how long you will hold between two opinions.

Jesus said there are two ways of life. The Bible says, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Some of you think you are all right and you are on the right road now. You do not realize you are on the broad road that leads to destruction.

Jesus said there are two roads: the broad road and the narrow road. The narrow road leads to eternal life. The broad road leads to destruction, and every person in this audience tonight is on one or the other. Which are you on?

Two Masters

He said there are two masters. He said you cannot serve God and mammon. You will either hate one and love the other, or love one and hate the other. He said, make a choice.

Two Fathers

He said there are two fathers. You know, the Bible does not teach the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man—not in the sense that many people teach it. By creation, He is our Father. By creation, we are all members of the same human race. And that is why we are to love each other, no matter what race we come from. We are all brothers in that sense.

But spiritually speaking, we are not all of the same Father and all of the same blood. There are only two groups: those who are lost and those who are saved. Those on the broad road and those on the narrow road. You must be on one or the other.

Two Destinies

And there are two destinies. There is a heaven, and there is a hell. I know it is not popular today to believe in hell. You can believe in heaven, but people would rather not think about hell. I do not blame you. It is a terrible place, but the Bible teaches that there is a hell.

There is a hell where men are going to be separated from God forever. And there is a heaven where we are going to fellowship with each other and fellowship with Christ forever. You must make a choice.

A Decision No One Can Make for You

You young people, you have to make a choice. This is one choice you cannot depend on your parents to make for you. Your parents can teach you and help you and do their best—and many of you parents have done your best with your children. You have prayed for them. You have loved them. But there comes a time when they have to make their own choice about Jesus Christ.

They have to decide for themselves, in the lonely arena of their own hearts. The greatest battle that has ever been fought is this battle in the heart of a young person about Jesus Christ.

And this is one thing you cannot depend on anybody to make for you. You have the ability to make it. You have the right to make it. You can say yes, or you can say no. It is one or the other. And Jesus does not allow for neutral ground.

Do Not Wait Too Long

He also warns against waiting too long. The Bible says, “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” And: “He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” Come while you can. Do not put it off any longer.

How long halt ye between two opinions?

Counting the Cost

There Is a Price to Be Paid

Now, when you make that choice, there is going to be a price to be paid. The people who choose Jesus Christ will pay a price.

There are thousands of people in other parts of the world who pay it. The price they have to pay is that they are ostracized from their family. In some parts of the world they can never go farther than grammar school if they make a decision for Christ. They can never get a job above menial labor if they make a decision for Christ. But in those parts of the world, thousands upon thousands are living for Jesus Christ.

An Unnatural Season

In America, we have had a sort of unnatural situation. It is almost popular to follow Christ in some areas of the country now. That will not last long. There is always a price. If you receive Christ as your Savior and try to live for Him, some people are going to sneer, and they are going to make fun behind your back.

In this period of conformity, we do not want to be considered too different—but He calls upon you to be different. When the gang is doing certain things you know to be wrong, you take your stand and say, “No, I cannot do that, because I am a Christian, because I believe in Jesus Christ.” It costs something to follow Christ.

Sit Down and Count the Cost

And Jesus said you had better sit down and count the cost one day. You see, a big crowd was following Jesus, and He said, “Wait a minute. Count the cost. Do you know that I am going to die on a cross, and if you follow Me, you are going to have to go die with Me?”

“Oh, we did not know that, Jesus. We thought You were setting up a big kingdom. We were going to be in the kingdom with You.” So they left Him. There will be the cross for you to bear before the crown.

Tested, Loved and Called Today

God Will Test You

When you do come to Jesus Christ, you are going to be tested by God. God never has anyone come to Him that He does not test. Some of you have made your decisions for Christ this week, and already you are being tested. Temptation has come. A friend does not understand the step that you have taken. Already you are filled with some doubts and weakness.

This is all normal to every person who ever came to Christ. We do not just start and jump right out and be full grown. Grady Wilson's daughter just had twins. Well, they were not born full grown. One was five pounds and one was six pounds, and they are just little tiny babies. But they will be full grown some day. It takes time to grow.

An Immediate Decision

God will test you when you come to Christ. And He demands an immediate decision. I wonder how many more sermons it would take to win you to Christ? How many more warnings will God have to give you? How many more graves will have to be dug? How many more wars will have to be fought? How many more earthquakes or tornadoes and floods will have to come before you make your decision?

The thief on the cross took that one moment and said, "Lord, remember me," and in that moment Jesus said, "Thou shalt be with me in paradise." That quick, you can make your decision and commitment.

God Loves You

And remember, God loves you. He has a plan for your life. You are sinful. You are separated from God by sin, and some of the results of this sin are worry and irritability and lack of purpose in life, as well as some of the gross immoral sins that we read about.

God has provided the cross as a means for you to be forgiven of sin, but you must individually receive Christ as your Lord and your Savior. You, and you alone, in the quiet arena of your heart, will have to make that decision.

The Story of Charlotte Elliott

How long will you halt between two opinions?

Charlotte Elliott was a beautiful woman. And a great preacher by the name of Caesar Malan went all over Switzerland. He was put out of his church because of his faith, but once, when he was in England, he met this beautiful, charming young woman by the name of Charlotte Elliott.

She was suffering ill health. He went up to her and asked her if she would become a Christian. She rebuked him and said, “I resent you asking me that.” And she was very irritated at him. He said, “I did not mean to be offensive to you, but I only meant to tell you that God loves you, and God is willing to change your life and give you peace in your heart.”

That night, Charlotte Elliott could not sleep. The words that the preacher spoke to her kept ringing in her ears. And during the night she got up, got on her knees and gave her life to Christ, and she sat down and wrote the hymn that we sing every night:

Come Just as You Are

*“Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that
Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”*

Just as you are. You do not have to go home and change clothes. You do not have to go home and get better. You cannot improve yourself. You come just like you are, with all your sins and all your failures and all your mistakes, with all your hypocrisy. You come just as you are. He will forgive you and change you and come into your life.

Come Forward Now

I am going to ask you to do just that, publicly and openly, right now. I am going to ask hundreds of you to get up out of your seat, from all over this stadium, and come and stand in front of this platform and say, by coming, “I do receive Christ.”

You may be a member of the church. You might have thought you were right with God before, but somehow you know you are not. You are not sure. You are not certain, but you would like to be. I am going to ask you to come right now. From up in the top

galleries, it will take a minute or two to come, but we are going to wait. Hundreds of people have come every night. You come. This is your moment and your hour of commitment.

After you have all come and stand here quietly, I am going to say a word to you, have a prayer with you, give you some literature, and you can go back and join your friends. And if you are with friends or relatives, or if you have come on a bus, they will wait for you. You get up and come right now and make your commitment to Christ. We are going to wait.

The Invitation

As hundreds are responding to Mr. Graham's invitation to make a public commitment to Jesus Christ, you can make that same commitment right where you are. Just pick up the phone and call the number you see on your screen. Special friends are waiting to talk with you and pray with you about this most important decision.

Now To Those Watching by Television

To you who are watching by television, you can make your commitment right now, in your home or wherever you happen to be watching. Hundreds of people here at the University of Kentucky Coliseum are coming to Jesus Christ. They are choosing between these two opinions. They are choosing Christ. They are coming just as they are. You can come just as you are, where you are. May God help you to make that commitment tonight. God bless you.

If you just prayed that prayer with my father, or if you have any questions about a relationship with Jesus Christ, why don't you just call that number on the screen. There will be someone there to talk with you, pray with you and answer those questions. And remember, God loves you!

If you would like to commit your life to Jesus Christ, please call us right now, toll free, at 1-877-772-4559. That is 1-877-772-4559. Or you can write to us at: Billy Graham, 1 Billy Graham Parkway, Department C, Charlotte, North Carolina 28201. Or you can contact us on the web, 24/7, at PeaceWithGod.tv. We will get the same helps to you that we give to everyone who responds at the invitation.

On behalf of Franklin Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, thank you for watching, and thank you for your prayers. There is only one way, only one hope. Come and give your life to Christ and see what happens.

Soli Deo Gloria

About The Speaker

William "Billy" F. Graham Jr. (1918–2018) was raised on a dairy farm in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1934, at age 15, he made a commitment to faith during a revival led by Mordecai Ham. He was ordained in 1939, graduated from Florida Bible Institute in 1940, and earned a B.A. from Wheaton College in 1943, where he married Ruth McCue Bell.

After pastoring in Illinois and serving as the first full-time evangelist for Youth for Christ International, Graham was vaulted into national prominence by the 1949 Los Angeles Crusade. This event launched decades of global outreach, including historic, extended crusades in London (1954), New York City (1957), Seoul (1973), and Rio de Janeiro (1974). Overall, he preached live to nearly 215 million people in over 185 countries and territories.

In 1950, he founded the [Billy Graham Evangelistic Association](#) (BGEA). Through BGEA, Graham hosted the syndicated *Hour of Decision* radio program for over 60 years, published *Decision* magazine, and authored 33 books—including bestsellers such as *Angels: God's Secret Agents* (1975) and his 1997 autobiography, *Just As I Am*.

A counselor to U.S. presidents, Graham appeared on Gallup's "Ten Most Admired Men in the World" list a record 61 times. His honors include the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1983), Congressional Gold Medal (1996), and an Honorary Knighthood (2001). Following his passing in 2018 at age 99, he lay in honor in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, and a bronze statue of him was added to the U.S. Capitol in 2024. Billy and Ruth raised five children, 19 grandchildren, 44 great-grandchildren, and nine great-great-grandchildren.

About Living Sermons

Our Vision

To become the world's largest digital archive for ebooks transcribed from live sermons, preserving and spreading the spoken Word of God across nations and generations.

Our Mission

At LivingSermons.com, our mission is to take the living voice of God spoken through His servants and transform it into accessible PDF resources, making salvation-centred truth available to the ends of the earth. We believe that the spoken Word carries divine power, and by preserving these messages in written form, we help extend their reach beyond pulpits, borders, and generations.

Why We Exist

Many life-changing sermons are preached and forgotten while some deteriorate over time. We exist to preserve these divine utterances, making them available for study, meditation, discipleship, and spiritual growth. Through this work, we are committed to ensuring that no revelational truth is lost, but that every inspired message can continue to speak, heal, transform, and bring men into the knowledge of Christ.

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YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@OfficialLivingSermons>

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