

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DECISION—ILLUSTRATED BY THE CASE OF JOSHUA.

A Sermon

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“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”—Joshua xxiv. 15.

Joshua knew that the people who surrounded him, while ostensibly serving Jehovah, were many of them secretly worshipping the ancient idols of their Mesopotamian fathers, those teraphim which were once hidden in Rachel's tent, and were never quite purged from Jacob's family. Some of them also harboured the Egyptian emblems, and some had even fallen into the worship of the gods of the people whom they had displaced, and were setting up the images of Baalim in their habitations. The people were nominally worshippers of Jehovah, but in very deed many of them had turned aside unto strange gods. Never in their best days had the children of Israel been quite divorced from idols, for, as Stephen said of them, even in the wilderness they took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan, figures which they made to worship. Now, being a thorough-going, decided, down-right man, Joshua could not endure double-mindedness, and therefore he pushed the people to decision, urging them to serve the Lord with sincerity, and, if they did so, to put away altogether all their graven images. He demanded from them a determination for one thing or the other, and cried, “If it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites among whom ye dwell.” He shut them up to a present choice, between the true God and the idols, and gave them no rest in their half-heartedness. Anticipating the cry of Elias upon Carmel, he demanded in effect, “How long halt ye between two opinions? If God be God, serve him, but if Baal be God, serve him.” Decision he demanded, and rightly so. Can either earth or heaven be quiet while such a matter is in suspense?

To compel them to avow their decision, he declared his own. A man's own personal example is eloquent beyond the power of words. Hear the grand old man. He cries, "You may hesitate, but my mind is made up once for all. Judge you as you will, my verdict is already given, and my children agree therein—as for me and my house we will serve Jehovah. We have no reverence for the demons of Canaan or the myths of Egypt, who could not preserve their own worshippers; our hearts are loyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who brought us up out of Egypt, and gave us this land for a heritage. So far as myself and my sons and my daughters are concerned, the die is cast, and Jehovah alone will we serve." This clear avowal on the part of Joshua was not a trick of eloquence, a resolve made for the first time in order to influence his audience, he had so lived that his avowal carried weight with all who heard it, else it had been idle to have uttered it. He had always been a man of firm step and determined mind. Probably this was one reason why Moses chose him to be his servant, and kept him in personal attendance upon himself.

His firmness comes out very clearly in his conduct as one of the twelve spies. The others brought up an evil report of the land, but not so Joshua and Caleb; though they were only two against ten, yet they maintained their testimony boldly, and when the people spoke of stoning them they did not falter for an instant, but remained faithful to their consciences. These two men alone survived the graves of the wilderness, because they alone were untainted with the wilderness sins. Take Joshua as a warrior too, for he was called to fight the Lord's battle, and you find him ever a good soldier of the Lord. What a soldier he was! Saul in after times might spare the condemned seed of Amalek, but not so Joshua, as long as Moses held up his hands to pray, the sword of Joshua stayed not in the work of execution. When Israel had crossed the Jordan to attack the Canaanites he had a commission from the Lord to extirpate these outlawed nations, and he made thorough work of it; so zealous was he in this war that the day was not long enough for him, and he bade the sun and moon stand still till the Lord's battle was fought out. Joshua, like his friend Caleb, "followed the Lord fully"; he might have taken for his motto the word "*thorough*." He belonged to Jehovah, heart and soul, and mind, and strength. As the successor of Moses, and the type of the Lord Jesus, he put on zeal as a cloak, and girded himself with fidelity as a garment. His appointed duty was fulfilled with martial strictness and unswerving steadiness; he had a single eye and a firm hand. He was strong and of good courage, and the Lord was with him. It was no idle boast when the old warrior and prince in Israel said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We admire fidelity in Joshua, and we confess that he needed it, but we may, perhaps, forget that there never was an age in which decision for God

was not equally required. It is well to admire this in another, but it is far better to possess it ourselves. In all times it is imperative upon men to take their stand for God and truth. In the first household outside of Eden Abel had need to protest against his elder brother's example, and to die in consequence. Enoch, when all round walked according to the course of this world, dared to be singular, and walked with God. Noah believed God amid universal wickedness, and persevered for long years in preparing the ark, though all men mocked his warnings. Abraham forsook country and home at the command of God, and became a pilgrim and a stranger, dwelling alone, and not numbered among the peoples. His was a grand life, for decided faith made him not only a mighty man, but a king among patriarchs. Each age had its man whose heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord to serve as a landmark for weaker saints to steer by, and a rock against which the tumult of the people raged in vain. Look at Moses, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, exciting a sluggish race to action, facing the tyrant king, and conducting Israel into the wilderness. What a princely soul grace made him! How firmly did he adhere to right and truth, so that he was faithful to God in all his house. Pass along through the Judges and you find that they were men decided for the Lord their God, or they would never have delivered Israel. Remember Samuel and David, and Nathan and Elijah. What grandeur surrounded the head of the Tishbite because he was exceeding zealous for the Lord God of Israel. No time-server he, as Jezebel and Ahab knew full well. In later years Daniel is the grand type of decision, as we see him opening his window, and praying, as aforetime, though he knows that the doom of death hangs over him. The three holy children also are before us defying the devouring flames of the furnace sooner than bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. In New Testament times John the Baptist rises to the front rank by his resolute fidelity, and Pilate sinks to eternal shame by reason of his vacillation. Paul is covered with renown, while Agrippa, who is "almost persuaded," is lost in oblivion. In each age decision has been the one thing wanted; to bend, and bow, and cringe has been fatal, but to stand like iron columns and brazen walls has been safety and honour. Today the like firmness is needed. We too must take our stand, and, taking it, must hold it as though we were rooted to the ground. O blessed Spirit give us grace for this! Faithful Redeemer, set thine image upon us that we too may resist even unto blood, striving against sin.

My discourse shall run thus: *Decision for the Lord*; let me *describe it, extol it, and demand it.*

First, let me describe it. It means many things, all of which must be wrought in us by divine grace, or we shall never possess them, though we may have their counterfeits. Decision implies first, that all *hesitation is*

gone. There is a period when the thoughtful mind hangs in equilibrium, and it is a question which way the scale will turn. We have a time of testing and proving, when the crucibles are brought out, and the fining pots are placed among the coals. To come wisely and speedily through this period is a great mercy. This was all over in the case of Joshua. He had finished the proving of all things, and reached the holding fast of that which is good. The balance was no longer in suspense, the scale had gone down for God and his cause, it rested in its place never to be moved. Joshua had a mind of his own, and he knew his own mind. Doubt had long ago vanished, debate was finally closed, resolve was taken, and taken without a grain of reserve, and consequently action was forcible and ardent. And now, dear friends, it is surely time with each one of us, especially with those of us who have reached the prime of life, that we too had done with the fickleness of irresolution. Have we not had enough of hesitation, deliberating, and trifling, and delaying? The time past may suffice for these; has it not been already far too long? You will make no journey, O traveller, if now that the sun is in its zenith you do not soon decide which way to walk! Mariner, your voyages will be scant if you much longer lie at anchor! The season of favourable winds is passing away, and yet your sail remains unfilled; will you never have solved the problem—"to what port shall I steer? With what cargo shall I load my barque?" Is our life to end in a constant repetition of the question, "What shall I be?" If we could change places with the weathercock, and become the toy of circumstances, irresolution might avail, but for a man decision is indispensable. He must know whereabouts he is and whither he is going; and it will be an evidence of salvation to him if he has cancelled doubt by a firm faith in Jesus, and ended hesitancy by full consecration to the service of the Lord. O that every man and woman among us had, through divine grace, come to this point, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

This state of heart indicates *superiority to the evil influence of others*. While we are children we are plastic to every hand. We believe what is told us by the last informant, our judgment is swayed by our parents, schoolmasters, and elders; but, when we come to be men and women, among the childish things which we put away, we ought to put away this propensity to lean upon other men's judgments. Our own understandings should now be exercised, or else why are they given to us? God waits to guide us, but he would have us cry to him, and not follow the trail of our fellows. We should endeavour to have a mind enlightened by grace, decided for God, and established in the truth, and then we should strike out our own path for God and his truth, and count it no very great hardship if in that path we should have to walk alone. A man should not be like a house which is one of a row, which would come down with a run if those on the right and left

were removed, but he should be altogether detached, so that all four walls will stand without another house to buttress them. Alas, I fear me that few have reached this point. The most of men are a feeble herd, and follow their leaders, having no minds of their own. Woe to them when blind leaders lead them into the ditch. The great guide of the world is fashion, and its god is respectability—two phantoms, at which brave men laugh. How many of you look around on society to know what to do? You watch the general current, and then float upon it. You study the popular breeze and shift your sails to suit it. True men do not so. You ask—Is it fashionable? If it be fashionable, it must be done. Fashion is the law of multitudes, but it is nothing more than the common consent of fools. The world has its fashions in religion as well as in dress, and many of you feel the influence of it. If you had fallen in among Christ's people some of you would have made a profession of religion before now, but having, on the contrary, been cast among the ungodly, albeit that you have some desires towards Christ, you are held back by the evil influence. What are ye but babes, fit for the nursery and the sucking-bottle? If ye were men, ye would stand on your own feet, and not need carrying in arms.

“Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose true,
And dare to make it known!”

Little will it abate our eternal misery if all the rest of the world should be lost with us; company in hell will be the reverse of consolation! If we lose heaven for fashion's sake it will be no solace to us that others lost it too. We are born alone, and shall have to die alone and to be judged alone, and it is time that we began to look into our souls' affairs with our best judgment, and no longer be as the sere leaf in the wind, or the log in the rapids. God has given to each man a conscience, to each man a heart, and he will not allow men to quench their personal consciences and yield up their hearts to be moulded by others. He will hold them personally responsible for the right use of judgment, reason, and heart; be ye sure of this. Oh sirs, may every one of us know the Lord for ourselves, and forsaking the broad road with its many travellers may we be bold to walk in the narrow way which leadeth unto life.

Right decision for God is deep, calm, clear, fixed, well grounded, and solemnly made. Joshua does not speak his determination lightly. Gaze upon the stern warrior's face scarred in many battles, bronzed with exposure, wrinkled with more than a hundred years of varied experience! He looks not like a trifler, he speaks not as one who sings a love song and trills it

from his lips, but his utterances rise from that broad breast of his with the rugged honesty and brave sincerity of a soldier prince. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord:" as much as if he had said, "I have known my God too many years to forsake him now. I have not bared my breast to the battle so many scores of times to be a coward now. I have not dwelt under the shadow of the Almighty forty years in the wilderness, and all these years in Canaan that I might seek to idols at last. The golden calf is not for me, I saw it ground to powder long ago. The idols of the Amorites are not for me, I have dashed thousands of them to the ground." He speaks as one who has weighed the matter, counted the cost, and come to a decision which he can defend against all comers. It would be idle to try and shake his resolve, it is as stable as Lebanon. You do not hear in him a time-server, who, to please men, falls in with the general affirmation; nor a mere scholar, repeating what he has learned by rote; nor a ceremonialist, muttering his *credo* for form's sake; but you hear an honest man revealing his heart, and uttering his inmost soul with awful earnestness, even in that utterance careless of being heard of men except so far as their hearing may be of use to themselves. He speaks with immovable resolve: his soul is anchored and defies all storms,—“As for me and my house *we will*, despite crowds and customs, *we will*, despite temptations and trials, *we will*, despite idols or devils, to the end of the chapter serve Jehovah.” Such ought the decision of every one of us to be, and I earnestly wish that so it were.

That resolve on the part of Joshua was *openly avowed*. I want to come straight home to some of you here who have said in your hearts, “Yes, we will serve the Lord,” but you have never yet avowed your allegiance, for you have thought it quite enough to promise in secret: does not Joshua's outspoken avowal make you blush? You are espoused to Christ, you say, but will there never be an open marriage? Will you never take him publicly before the eyes of men to be your Lord and husband for ever and ever? Does Jesus agree to secret nuptials? Can such a thing be done in a corner? Of old the candle was put on a candlestick, is it now to be put under a bushel? You say you are his soldier, will you never put on your Prince's regimentals? Shall your Captain's colours never adorn you? Will you never come forward and take your Commander's weapon in your hand and march at his bidding to the fight? That is sorry courage which skulks behind the bushes: that is poor loyalty which never utters the king's name; that is questionable decision which dares not own itself to be on the Lord's side. Remember how the Lord Jesus said, “He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father who is in heaven.” I like this in Joshua, that he would have no one be in doubt as to where he was. He gives them his whereabouts plainly enough. Where Jehovah's altar smokes with the sacrifice of bullocks, where the paschal lamb is slain, and the blood is sprinkled,

where the high priest offers incense to the one invisible and ever glorious God, there will you find Joshua, and there my sons and daughters too, for "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Why are you not equally openhearted, O ye who love the Lord? What excuse have you for your silence? I am not able to see what is the good of a decision, however firm and deep, if it be never avowed. It may be good for the man who has made it, but as far as society is concerned what can be the influence of a decision altogether secret? Why, my brethren, should there be concealment? Our God has not loved us with reserve, and kept his mercy in the dark. Our Saviour has not gone sneaking down the ages ashamed to confess the mortals whom he loved; and if he has never been ashamed of us we never ought to be ashamed of him. O, my brethren, can you hesitate? Are you not ashamed of being ashamed, and afraid to be any longer afraid? Out with it! There, run up the colours to the masthead, where every eye may see them, and there let them be nailed; and if any man is at war with Jesus he is at war with us: let earth and hell know this once for all.

In Joshua's case his resolve was not only openly avowed, but *earnestly carried out*. Some have avowed themselves on the Lord's side, and yet they do not serve the Lord; their names are down in the church book, and they attend to the outward ordinances, but as for any serving the Lord, you will have to search for it, and search in vain. Joshua went in for serving God in truth. He was a soldier, and if any one had asked him, "whose soldier are you, Joshua?" he would have answered, "I am God's soldier." "Whose battles do you fight?" "I fight the battles of Jehovah." "And what is your object in fighting?" "To glorify Jehovah." He was committed to the Lord's cause from head to foot. Many professors do not understand what this means. They view religion as a kind of off-hand farm, they have another estate, which is their home and main care, and the kingdom of God is an off-hand farm, to be mainly managed by the minister as a bailiff. Their religion gets their spare time and odd thoughts. Jesus comes in for the cold meat that is left over, and the world has the hot joints. Religion is by no means the great channel along which the strength of their life runs, but it is a sort of backwater. They let the waste water run there, when they have more than enough to turn the mill-wheel of business. They are seen at prayer meetings when there are no accounts to settle, and no new books to read; and they do something for the church of God when they have nothing on hand, no friend coming to spend the evening with them, and no amusement available. They treat the Lord Jesus Christ very cavalierly. They hope they will be saved by him,—I hope they will! They say they will be wonders of grace if they are, and *I think they will*. Such conduct to the bleeding Lamb is base, and I hate it. As for me, I will be bold enough to say with Joshua "I will serve the Lord,"—that is to say, if I am his servant I will be his servant

and lay myself out for him. I will not bear his name, eat his bread, and wear his livery, and yet do him no service. Better die than live so dishonestly. Certain servants of great men are kept merely for show. You shall go into my lord's house, and see a fine fellow who is paid a considerable income. What does he do? He is not kept to do anything, he is the ornament of the establishment; the display of those magnificent calves, and that beautiful form which looks so well in livery, is all his master gets. Surely some Christians suppose that they are engaged on the same terms, and that the Lord Jesus Christ, having the distinguished honour of having their names in his church book, is perfectly satisfied, though they do nothing. These are the fellows who are everlastingly grumbling at those who do serve, and so become the pests of the church. Be ye not like them, better far die outright. With real labour serve ye the Lord, to whose free grace and dying love you owe your all.

Once more. Joshua's decision was *adhered to throughout the whole of his life*. He had begun early in the service of God, and he never repented of it. A hundred years rolled over his head, but we never discover in him any desire to take up with the service of Baal, or the service of the teraphs. He continued to the last, true to the resolve, "We will serve Jehovah." Happy are we, brethren, if grace enlisted us in the service of Christ while we were yet young, happier still if grace has kept us to middle age still firm in our young resolve, and happiest of all shall we be if when our hair is grey we shall be able to say, "O God, thou hast been my God from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." He who decides aright for God decides for eternity. Beloved, you never will repent of serving God. There never was such a case yet. My Lord and master never turns off his old servants, nor do his old servants ever run away from him. The more they serve him, the more they wish to serve him. Their physical strength may fail them, but never their love to his work. They still bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. Blessed are they who have this abiding thoroughness in the cause of the Lord their God.

II. Let me now PRAISE DECISION. In religion nothing is more desirable than to be out-and-out in it. With some little variation I might say of it as of knowledge—

"A little piety is a dangerous thing,
Drink deepest draughts at that refreshing spring."

To enjoy religion you must plunge into it. To wade into it up to the ankles may make you shiver with anxieties, doubts, and questionings, till you resemble a trembling boy unwillingly entering a bath on a cold morning; but to plunge into its depths is to *secure a glow of holy joy*. Some of you are ill-at-ease at sea, but my friend in the blue jacket over yonder likes it well

enough, for he is always there. His home is on the rolling wave, and there are no sea-sicknesses for him. Those of you who make short trips upon the sea of piety, and do a little coasting religion now and then, are sick with doubts and fears, but if you sailed always on that sea you would get your sea legs, you would gain full assurance, and see the glories of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. It is with true religion as with the American's orchard. A gentleman was invited into a garden to taste the apples. "No," he said, "I would rather not," and being often asked to come and partake, and yet refusing, the other said, "I guess you've a prejudice against my apples." "Yes," said the man, "I have tasted a few of them and they are very sour." "But which," said he, "did you taste?" "Why, those apples which fall into the road over the hedge." "Ah, yes," said the owner, "they are as sour as crabs, I planted them for the good of the boys, but if you come into the middle of the lot you will find a different flavour"; and it was so. Now, just round the border of religion, along the outer hedge there are some very sour apples, of conviction, self-denial, humiliation, and self-despair, planted on purpose to keep off hypocrites and mere professors; but in the midst of the garden are luscious fruits, mellow to the taste, and sweet as nectar. The central position in religion is the sweetest. The nearer to God the sweeter the joy. If I were a German, which I am not, the last sort of German I should like to be would be an Alsatian or a Lorrainer, because I should have to be a German by nationality, but might be even more a Frenchman in manners; and if ever the fight should be renewed between the two nations, the fighting would be sure to come very near my farm and home. I should not like to be a German-Frenchman, or a French-German in time of war; but would prefer to be of pure breed. As to sacred things I would not be a neutral. No, no, let me be out and out, thorough and decided. If you are a Christian, be a Christian. If you serve the devil, serve him out and out; and if you serve the Lord, serve him with your whole heart and soul and strength.

Decision for God enables a man to direct his way. A man who resolves that he will serve the Lord knows his way about the world. Something will happen to you in business tomorrow, you will have a fine chance, you will be able to make a deal of money, but it will be by sailing very near the wind, and you would rather not have the transaction published in *The Times*. When that temptation comes before you, how will you act? I do not know, but if you have made up your mind that you will serve the Lord, you will not need to consult your partner, your course will be clear. Nine out of every ten questions which can possibly come before you in your business are already answered when the grand question is settled. Is such an action dishonest? Then it matters nothing how profitable it might be, it is dismissed as quite beyond consideration. Is such a course necessitated by hon-

esty? Then let it be followed whatever the loss may be. David prayed “lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies,” and the man who has made up his mind by divine grace that he will serve the Lord has that prayer fulfilled.

This saves many men from temptation. Satan tempts those who can be tempted, but when he finds men sufficiently resolved there is a certain order of temptation with which he never assails them any more. He adapts his devices to our standing, and does not use for lion-hearted minds those petty nets with which he takes small birds. As a giant walks along unconscious of the cobwebs across his path, so does a thoroughly consecrated man break through a thousand temptations, which indeed to him are no longer temptations at all.

Thorough-going men *wield a mighty influence*. Joshua was able to speak for his house as well as for himself. Many fathers cannot speak for themselves, and therefore you may guess the reason why they cannot speak for their families. Joshua’s religion was so intense that it, by the divine blessing, set his sons burning with the same flame. I have known a Christian woman to be so low in grace that she never influenced one of her children to desire to be like her; and I have heard of fathers who we hope were Christian men, whose force to repel from piety was greater than their power to attract to it. God give us more vitality on our own religion, and we shall influence our children and servants, and from them the savour will spread all around. For this reason and a thousand more it is beyond measure desirable to be decided and resolute for the Lord’s cause. Hesitation and wavering can answer no purpose, but prompt decision is in every way commendable.

III. I find I shall not be able to say one half of what I intended to have said this morning, and therefore I shall come to a close by demanding this decision for Christ, which I have described and praised. May the Holy Ghost enable you to answer to the demand. Decision is required because the Lord deserves to have it. He who made us ought not to be served hesitatingly. He who gave his Son to die for us ought not to be trifled with. By the splendour of Deity, and the glory of the cross, I claim your whole hearts for my Lord. If the Christian religion be a lie, it is a most detestable one, and it ought to be abhorred heartily, but if the service of God be indeed right, and if religion be a matter of fact, it demands our whole heart, and soul, and strength; nor should it have less. The service of the Lord is not a matter to be loosely touched with the tips of one’s fingers, but it should excite all the powers and passions of our entire nature to obedient action. My dear hearer, look at yourself for a moment. Is there much in you, taking the largest estimate you can of yourself? Are your dimensions so very vast? Compare yourself with the thrice holy God. Those tall archangels who bow

before him are as nothing in his sight, what must you be? And if you as a whole are so little, do you dream of dividing yourself and giving God a part? The heaven, even the heaven of heavens and the realms of space are not enough for him; and all things that he hath made are but as a drop in a bucket compared with his infinite majesty; as for this little dominion of your body and soul, will you carve it out among rival monarchs, and insult the Lord by offering him a corner, while you save spaces for the world, the flesh, and the devil? Mock not the majesty of heaven so. If a gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam above the Rhine should talk of dividing its allegiance between the German Emperor and the French Marshal, you would smile. Shall you, you insignificant creature, talk of dividing yourself between God and Mammon?

Let me demand of you, dear friends, that you give to God your whole mind and soul, because to attempt a middle position is mean and dishonourable. Who claims to be indifferent to the claims of virtue? Who dares to be neutral in the battle between truth and a lie? Brand him as a coward! To refuse to take our place upon great questions is disgraceful, and when the issue is one which divides the unwise, a question between holiness and sin, between God and the devil, why it is a mean thing for a man to insinuate that he really is not called upon to decide, and that he may take up a position midway between the two. God save you from such dishonour. If, after all, the world and the things thereof be best, say so and take your side, and this morning, if not another person should do it, say in your heart "As for me and my house, we will serve ourselves and the world." If you mean it, say it out straight, and do not cloak it. But for a man to say, "I cannot determine what I shall serve, but I rather think I shall serve myself till I get pretty nearly worn out, and then I shall turn about and try what is to be done with religion," is detestable. Such beings are hardly as respectable as oxen and asses, which at least know their owners.

Not to decide for the Lord is dangerous in the last degree. There is Lot in Sodom: perilous is his position, but the angels come to him, and they say, "This city is to be burned with fire, you must escape." Lot is on the road at once, and ere long he reaches the mountain, and is safe. His wife is willing to go too, and yet unwilling; she wavers and delays. She has not quite made up her mind. She does not like leaving that house full of new furniture, and that wardrobe of fine linen. Moreover, her neighbours, though they did not go to chapel every Sunday, and were rather loose in their morals, were very cheerful, chatty people, she did not quite like leaving them. See, she looks back! She may look back for ever, for there she stands, transformed into a pillar of salt. Oh, you who think the world has many attractions, you who would like to serve God but still feel that there is a great deal to be said on the other side of the question, come and taste

this salt; its acrid flavour may be healthy to you if it makes you henceforth dread dallying and hesitating.

Remember there are no curses in the Bible more terrible than those which are directed against those who stand halting between two opinions. Listen to this Old Testament curse, you who make no profession, you who contradict your profession by ill lives. “Curse ye Meroz, saith the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Did they fight against the Lord? Not they. Why are they accursed? Because they did not fight *for him*. What if this curse is hovering over this house to fall upon the head of those men who go not forth to the help of the Lord! Will it fall upon you? Now, listen to the New Testament word, which comes from those lips which never spoke too roughly, lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh; here they are: “I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art neither cold nor hot I will spew thee out of my mouth.” Who is this offensive one? Did he burn the Saviour’s lips by hot persecutions? No. Did he freeze them with utter coldness of heart? No, he was a harmless, good sort of person, moderate, sober, easy-going—in fact, a lukewarm man. He was a little warm, only a little more and he would have been hot. He was a little cool, only a little cooler and he would have been as refreshing as the snows of Lebanon. He was neither cold nor hot. Yes, and Christ said he loathed him. I do not read of his spewing anything out of his mouth except this, but this he cannot bear. Some of you, if you judged yourselves would say you are not good enough for heaven, but rather too good for hell; alas, hell is your portion, and an inner dungeon therein. Repent of your double-mindedness, and turn unto the Lord with purpose of heart.

I can see where you are, you betweenites. There is the army of God, a vast and mighty host on yonder hill: I see the glittering warriors ready for the fray. Yonder encamps the host of Satan on the opposite hill: black and grim is the prince, and fierce are they that follow him. Where are we this morning? Some of us can say we are with the Prince Emanuel: though we are poor warriors, yet we serve under his standard. Possibly there are some here who are on the wrong side, but are yet so honest that they will not deny that they are enlisted on the opposite side; but my hearers, *where are you?* Where are you? “We are thinking about it.” But where are you while you are thinking? We are considering and judging. But *where are you now?* Mark this! When the fight comes on and our Lord’s artillery shall come into play, and when the adversaries on the other hand reply to us, you will receive the shot from both sides, and when the armies come to deadly hand-to-hand fight you will be trampled down by both. Do we not read of some who will wake up “to shame and everlasting contempt”? The saints will be ashamed of you, because you did not join with Christ in the day of battle,

and the adversary himself will despise you because you shrunk away even from him. Be one thing or the other.

In closing, remember that to be between the two is, after all, utterly impossible. Though I have thus pictured some as hovering between the two armies, it is not actually the case, for every man is on one side or the other. You are either dead or alive, either justified or condemned, either in the gall of bitterness or enjoying the sweets of liberty. No man can serve two masters, and no man can be without a master. God will not have half the soul, and the world will not have half the soul. Both God and sin are imperious, and monopolizing they will have the whole or none.

God and mammon! O be wiser,
Serve them both? It cannot be.
Ease in warfare, saint and miser?
These will never well agree.
Give the fawning foe no credit,
So the bloody flag's unfurled;
That base heart, the word has said it,
Loves not God that loves the world.

Put Christ into the heart and he will chase sin out, or keep sin in the soul and sin will put down every better thought till the man is altogether vile. When you get home write this down if you can, "*As for me, I will serve the Lord.*" Put your name to it in earnest. Or, if this is not to your mind, write "*As for me, I will serve the world,*" and put your name to it. I long to drive you to decision. If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him. Oh, may the Spirit of God lead you to decide for God and his Christ this very moment, and he shall have the praise for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Joshua xxiv. 11–27; Psalm ci.

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