

Stop Hesitating: “Make Up Your Mind!”

This is not going to be “A Tale of Two Cities,” but it will be “A Tale of Two Situations” (with apologies to Charles Dickens)!

Our English word “hesitate” does not occur in the NASV of the N.T. However, it appears twice in the O.T.

I. Situation #1

In Gen.19, two angels came to the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to rescue Lot and his family from the coming destruction, cf. 18:16-33; 19:1-11. They warned Lot to take all of his family and flee, vv.12-13. Lot tried, unsuccessfully, to convince his sons-in-law to come leave with him, but they thought he surely must be jesting and refused, v.14. When the angels again (v.15) urged Lot to take his family and go, v.16 says, “**He hesitated.**” That hesitation almost cost Lot and his family their lives- and it would have had it not been for the “*the compassion of the Lord*” (see also 2Pet.2:7-18, “*righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men... his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds*”).

What, do you suppose, caused Lot to **hesitate** when offered salvation by the angels?

- Did he not believe their words of warning- perhaps that God wouldn’t really destroy the cities? No, that couldn’t be it because he warned his sons-in-law, v.14.
- Did he not believe in their power to save him and his family- perhaps that they weren’t really from God? No, that also couldn’t be it since he had seen their miraculously destructive power himself, vv.10-11.
- Was it a longing for the life he was about to leave behind that caused him to hesitate? We are not told specifically, but this seems to be the reason his wife violated the angel’s command of v.17, and perished, v.26.
- Or, was he just paralyzed by fear- too scared to move? Perhaps, but if so, it almost cost him and his family their lives!
- Whatever the reason, Lot’s hesitation was very nearly as disastrous for him as the wickedness of Sodom was for them!
- Think about that: hesitating (delaying or refusing to act) was very nearly just as catastrophic as having sins which were “*exceedingly grave*,” 18:20!

II. Situation #2

The other place in the O.T. wherein the word “*hesitate*” is found occurs in 1Kings 18.

Elijah, because of the extreme wickedness of Ahab, Jezebel, and the people of Israel, had caused a drought in the land, cf. 16:30-33; 17:1. God warned him to flee and hide east of the Jordan (out of Israel) to keep Ahab from killing him, and likely to teach Elijah something about patience and dependence as well, 17:2-7. Then, when the brook there finally dried up, God sent Elijah further away to Zarephath in Sidon (NW of Israel), 17:8-24. There Elijah remained until God told him to return and show

himself to Ahab, 18:1ff. When Elijah did so, Ahab addressed him as the “*troubler of Israel*,” (v.17; isn’t it interesting that the one who points out the sin is often accused of “causing trouble” instead of the sinner, cf.v.18?). Elijah told Ahab to gather “*all Israel...with the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah...*” v.19; and Ahab did as instructed, v.20. Apparently Ahab, who had issued all kinds of threats, and had others looking everywhere (cf. v.10) for Elijah, was not nearly so bold when face to face alone with him! Nonetheless, when all Israel came to Elijah at Mt. Carmel as instructed, he said, “*How long will you **hesitate** between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. **But the people did not answer him a word,***” v.21.

Again, there are a couple of things worthy of our note in this regard:

- How had the people been *hesitating*? Was it not that they were seeking to serve both God *and* Baal, cf. vv.36-39?
- Aren’t the words of Elijah’s accusation proven true even by their response to his question? They “*did not answer him a word*”- their **hesitation** continued even then! Thankfully, after the demonstration, they finally stopped hesitating and did what they should have done long before, v.40!

I. Now the lessons for us:

- A. “He who *hesitates* is lost” is not always always true (by the grace of God as manifested to Lot and Israel), but certainly can be physically and spiritually fatal if one hesitates too long (as it was for the residents of the valley of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the prophets of Baal)!

Both the Sodomites and Baal’s prophets had ample opportunity to “see” the truth, but persisted in their sinful ways.

- B. Whether the cause of our hesitation to do the right thing is *faithlessness*, *cowardice*, or *rebellion*, the consequence is the same- destruction!

- C. There are clear choices before us each day- make up your mind to stop hesitating and/or *looking back* with fondness and longing on your sinful past and do the right thing!