Grace Evangelical Free Church March 26, 2023

**1 Kings 18:1-16** Obadiah: Servant of Jehovah

There are no less than thirteen Obadiahs mentioned in the Old Testament, but this man was governor, or lord chamberlain, in the palace of King Ahab. Some have written most disparagingly about this servant of the Lord, failing to comprehend the Lord’s use of him who, while having his share of failures, overcame his fear and did as the Lord would have.

**1 Kings 18:3c**: “**Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly.**”

* **Grammatical Usage:** “**feared**” or in the Hebrew, “yare” meaning, “reverence; love; honor, gratitude, obedience.”
* **Literal Interpretation:** “**Now Obadiah had profound respect originating from love: honoring God, expressing gratitude and obedience to His commands.**”
* **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. Obadiah feared the Lord in a day of apostasy, idolatry and immorality coupled with a government determined to eliminate all trace of Yahweh. Lessons to consider:

1. Obadiah came to know the Lord when he was quite young.

Confirmed in **vv. 3 & 12**, what lies behind these words? Did Obadiah have godly parents? It is significant that his name means “a servant of the Lord”. What a heritage! (**2 Timothy 3:15**). What a blessing it is when children come to know the Lord! None are too young to come to Jesus just as none too old (**John 3:4**). But the percentage of those who are saved in later life is very small indeed. An evangelist tested his audience of 4,500, and asked for various age groups to signify when they came to Christ. The result was:- 400 of those present were saved under 10 years of age; 600 were saved between 10 and 14; 1,000 were saved between 16 and 20; 24 only were saved after the age of 36. The remainder in the audience were unsaved. How important it is to seek to reach the boys and girls and young people with the gospel message with a view to leading them to Christ! (**Ecclesiastes 12**; compare **Proverbs 22:6**).

2. Obadiah not only knew the Lord, but he feared Him greatly.

He reverenced God with an intense zeal and enthusiasm and a true dedication. This is God’s desire for all His people (**Deuteronomy 5:29**; compare **Proverbs 1:7**; **8:13**; **10:27**; **14:26**; **15:16** and **19:23**). To fear the Lord does not mean to be possessed with a slavish fear; it means to love Him, to have a strong desire to please Him and to be “afraid” of grieving Him. Fear is an emotion which grips us, and to fear the Lord means to be gripped by a disposition to resist everything which would displease and dishonor Him.

3. Obadiah had continued as a faithful follower of the Lord over many years.

Notice the word “**since**” in **v. 12**. Obadiah trusted God and began to serve Him when he was a mere boy, but he had continued to do so over many years (**Acts 26: 22**; **Luke 9:62**). It is a great thing to start, but it is greater to start and to go on! (**Psalm 36:3**; compare **John 8:31**; **15:9**; **Acts 13:43**; **14:22**; **Colossians 1:23**; **1 Timothy 2:15** and **2 Timothy 3:14**). “It’s not the fellow who starts who succeeds, but the fellow who starts and sticks”.

4. Obadiah lived for the Lord and served Him in a very difficult sphere and under the most trying conditions.

This God-fearing man was chief steward in Ahab’s household, and he was immediately responsible to King Ahab and to his wicked, scheming wife, Jezebel. Would it not have been better for Obadiah to seek other employment? Not necessarily – see what we are told about Joseph (**Genesis 41:41**); Daniel (**Daniel 2:48**); Mordecai (**Esther 2:19**), and the saints in Caesar’s household (**Philippians 4:22**). We are to honor the king, or the ruler whoever he is – Ahab or Nero: “**Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor**” (**1 Peter 2: 17**).

5. Obadiah was well known among the Lord’s people for an act which showed deep compassion and great courage.

Obadiah was quite naturally fearful (**vv. 4; 13**). He actually showed very great concern for the welfare of the sons of the prophets by hiding them and by feeding them. This was a brave thing to do, and his daring act saved many lives from suffering, starvation and death. Let us remember in our prayers the many who today are showing great courage and compassion as they live for and serve the Lord in a completely alien situation. More than this, Obadiah was assuring the truth and testimony of the Ture Living God was not only preserved but perpetuated.

6. Obadiah, although he loved and served the Lord, was very human!

We learn this from **vv. 5 - 6**. Although Elijah was a man of iron, a strong, brave servant of God, he also was very human (**1 Kings 19:1-3** and compare **James 5:17** – he was “**a man just like ourselves.**”) There is encouragement here for all of us, for when we read in the Bible of those whom God raised up and used in His service we are apt to think that they were men and women of special qualities. They were, when God fashioned them, but in themselves, and apart from what the Lord, they were just like ourselves. Two good verses to look up and relate to this emphasis are found in **2 Corinthians 3:5-6**, and **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**.

7. Obadiah, by his faithfulness, made an unconscious contribution to the great and mighty victory of the Lord.

**Verses 15** and **16** make great reading! They remind us that Obadiah’s service for the Lord was a valuable link in the chain of God’s working. At the end of his life he was able to pray with the psalmist:

“**O God, from my youth you have taught me,**

**and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.**

**18 So even to old age and gray hairs,**

**O God, do not forsake me,**

**until I proclaim your might to another generation,**

**your power to all those to come.**” (**Psalm 71:17-18**).

* **Conclusion**: What is your life contributing to? What prayer should you pray?