

Obadiah
1 Kings 18:1-16
5/5/19

Introduction:

Several things to know before we look at this passage and Obadiah:

1. This is most likely not the same Obadiah who is listed among the books of the Minor Prophets.
2. This is the only narrative passage we find Obadiah within.
3. This passage fits within the larger context of the story of Elijah, though we will focus in on Obadiah we will also pass over the other details in the story.
4. This passage leads to and introduces the well-known story of Elijah versus the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.
5. Obadiah is a character whom we can relate with and learn great lessons from.

Theme: There are several lessons that we can learn as Christians by reflecting on Obadiah's example.

- I. Elijah is sent by God to relieve the land of the famine. 1 Kings 18:1-2
 - a. God commands Elijah to go to Ahab. 1 Kings 18:1
After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."
 - b. Elijah goes to Ahab. 1 Kings 18:2
So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.
 - i. Before we write this off as just an insignificant part of the narrative consider the danger that Elijah would be walking into. In considering the danger we have to look into a couple of things:
 1. Who is Ahab? 1 Kings 16:29-34 *In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. 31 And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. 32 He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal,*

which he built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. 34 In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

2. What did Elijah previously do to Ahab? 1 Kings 17:1 *Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."*
3. How did Ahab respond? 1 Kings 18:10 *As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, 'He is not here,' he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you.*
4. With all that being said, understanding this context, consider the danger Elijah is in by being sent to and going to Ahab.
 - ii. Consider how much boldness Elijah would have needed in his first address to Ahab to declare a drought and now how much more would he need to confront Ahab after his hiding and Ahab's searching for three years.
 - iii. Elijah's unhesitating obedience allowed him to be used by God to show that this drought was not from Baal but the Lord God!

II. We are introduced to Obadiah. 1 Kings 18:3-4

- a. Two things in specific this text gives concerning Obadiah:

- i. Obadiah is a servant of Ahab. 1 Kings 18:3

And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly,

1. What does it mean that he was over his "household"?
 - a. The phrase is pretty general; we are not told exactly what this entailed.
 - b. Though we can determine that he oversaw something within the house/kingdom of Ahab. He had a position of oversight within Ahab's reign.

- c. We also can determine that he held a special/unique position.
 1 Kings 18:5-6, *And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." 6 So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself.*
- ii. Obadiah is a servant of God. 1 Kings 18:3-4
1. Obadiah had a reverent obedience toward God. 1 Kings 18:3
And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly.
 2. Obadiah was willing to risk his life for the Lord's prophets. 1 Kings 18:4
and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)
- iii. So Obadiah is a servant of Ahab, he works for Ahab but he also serves God, he has faith in God, he has submitted his life to God. What are we to make of this? Is Obadiah doing something wrong? The simple answer we learn from Obadiah is no. But why?
1. Obadiah does not compromise his faith; he does not change the way he lives for God to serve Ahab.

In seeing Obadiah serving Ahab and God we are not to see Obadiah as serving them equally or somehow compromising his faith in God to serve Ahab.

Obadiah is a servant of Ahab, a wicked and evil king though it does not seem like that has influenced Obadiah at all as we just saw he risked his life to go against Ahab's wife!

2. It can be seen in the scriptures that God often gives his servants favor in the sight of their unbelieving masters.

- a. Such as Joseph with Potiphar and Pharaoh, Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar and Darius and even Paul with Julius the centurion on Paul's journey to Rome.
 - b. God could and does use this to influence and impact these unbelieving masters for his sake.
- iv. Application: Are we as Christians to have close contact with non-Christians? Should we work for an unbelieving boss? Should we have friends that are unbelievers? I believe this passage gives us an excellent example of how. In answering these questions of application we get our first lesson:

1. **The first lesson we learn from Obadiah is that we can and even should be willing to live, work with and befriend unbelievers while staying strong in our faith.** So for us I believe that Obadiah both is an example and challenges us in how we relate to unbelievers in several ways:

- a. Working for and with unbelievers is by no means wrong or sinful as we are called to be in the world. To build relationships and friendships with those who do not believe.
- b. In working for an unbelieving boss or with unbelieving coworkers do not compromise your faith. Do not live as they live or speak as they speak but continue to live as God has called us to though no one else is. The same can go for kids at school or teens on a sports team, your teachers, coaches, other students may not believe in Jesus Christ but you are to continue.
- c. In working or going to school with unbelievers we are to see it as an opportunity in which God has given us to influence and impact them for his sake, to take time to share your beliefs, to build relationships with them.
- d. We are to realize that we can get along and have a terrific relationship with an unbelieving boss or teacher or another student as God can give us favor in their eyes. But at the same time we can expect hatred and strife from unbelievers as well.

- e. I believe A.W. Pink summarizes Obadiah and his example well to us when he says, “There is nothing wrong in a child of God holding a position of influence if he can do so without the sacrifice of principle... It renders valuable service for God.”

III. Ahab tasks Obadiah to solve the problem of the famine. 1 Kings 18:5-6

And Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals.” 6 So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself.

IV. The interaction between Obadiah and Elijah. 1 Kings 18:7-15

- a. Obadiah meets Elijah with respect. 1 Kings 18:7

And as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. And Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face and said, “Is it you, my lord Elijah?”

- b. Elijah sends Obadiah to Ahab. 1 Kings 18:8

And he answered him, “It is I. Go, tell your lord, ‘Behold, Elijah is here.’ ”

- c. Obadiah realizes that his life could be in danger. 1 Kings 18:9-14

- i. Obadiah questions if he had sinned to deserve this death sentence. 1 Kings 18:9

And he said, “How have I sinned, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?”

- ii. Obadiah explains why he sees this as a death sentence. 1 Kings 18:10-12

- 1. Reason #1: Ahab had searched continuously for Elijah. 1 Kings 18:10-11
As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, ‘He is not here,’ he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. 11 And now you say, ‘Go, tell your lord, “Behold, Elijah is here.” ’

- 2. Reason #2: Obadiah believes Elijah will disappear. 1 Kings 18:12
And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where. And so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth.

- iii. Obadiah explains why he is undeserving of this death sentence. 1 Kings 18:13-14

Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here" '; and he will kill me."

- d. In light of this interaction, in light of what Elijah asks and how Obadiah responds we are left to question: What is going on with this faithful, courageous man? Has he lost his faith? Is Obadiah a faithful servant of God or a failure to God's purposes? Has Obadiah become stagnant in his faith after being so faithful to God?
- i. **The second lesson we learn from Obadiah is that even as Christians it is going to be a constant struggle to fear and become anxious on a daily basis.**
 - ii. Consider, the daily anxieties, the constant fear that we encounter on an everyday basis. It may not even be a big decision and we approach the next day fearing what we may encounter. We stress over a conversation that needs to be had. We get anxious for a test that we are about to take. We fear what we are going to be asked to do.
 - iii. Also consider, how often you can go from reading the Bible, sitting through a worship service, hearing the Word of God preached and then you run into a difficult situation and you fear, you start to think about what is going on in your life and you feel helpless.
 - iv. Consider, how often do you assume and decide something that will happen when really you have no clue the outcome? How often do you believe like Obadiah did that the results will be the worst possible?
 - v. So what are we to do? How can we respond to anxieties and stress? (and no the answer is not "just don't be anxious")
 1. This passage shows how much we need God. Left to ourselves we would fret and worry and assume things that haven't and will not even happen.
 - a. Psalm 18:1-3

I love you, O LORD, my strength.

² *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

³ *I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.*

b. Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2. We can pray to God for the faith, the trust and dependence upon him that allows us to have unhesitating obedience as we saw earlier in this passage Elijah had.

e. Elijah promises that he will reveal himself to Ahab that very day. 1 Kings 18:15

And Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today."

i. Here we see that Obadiah's assumptions, what he raised as excuses were not true at all, but only fears he had!

ii. Application: Often times our fears and assumptions do not even happen!

iii. Elijah promises him that surely he will reveal himself to Ahab.

V. Ahab and Elijah meet. 1 Kings 18:16

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah.

VI. Conclusion