

THE WORLDLY, GOD-FEARING COMPROMISER

1 Kings 18:1-16

INTRODUCTION: #3574 Losing Both. Some years ago the ship *Shanunga*, on the way from Liverpool to N.Y., collided in fog with the Swedish barque *Iduna* from Hamburg, carrying 206 passengers. The *Iduna* sank in 1/2 hour. Immediately life boats were lowered for rescue. There were 34 survivors, 172 lost including one captain. Captain Patten of the *Shanunga* told of the catastrophe, "No statement could exaggerate the horrors of that awful moment." All the survivors were picked up from the surface of the water. All others seized their belts of gold and silver and tied them around their waists, attempting to save their wealth. But they lost both their possessions and their lives, being unable to stay afloat till boats came to rescue them. And so it is with the majority of people today. They live for the present and retirement with little thought, concern, and investment of their lives for Eternity even though they profess to be 'Christians.' But there is a vast difference between professing to be so and persistently living as bondsman-Christians. Which are you?

It was this way again and again throughout the history of Israel and especially in the days of Elijah's ministry (893-875 B.C. or 3234-3252 A.C.). There were four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the groves for idol worship in contrast to one hundred professing, silent, scared, and hiding prophets (who feared The LORD, Jehovah but feared Jezebel more because she eliminated all the other prophets plus Elijah. Then there were 7000 silent individuals that did not bow the knees to Baal.

It was a dark and evil day in Israel in mid 3234 A.C. or 893 B.C. under the rule of Ahab. After abruptly entering the king's court in **Sahmáhreh-eeah** (Samaria) and pronouncing that a drought would take effect with no more dew nor rain in Israel these years except according to his word, Elijah retreated to experience The God's persistent provision and preservation. Then 3+ years after entering king Ahab's court with his abrupt, shocking announcement (1 Kings 17:1-3), The God ordered Elijah to go and show himself again to Ahab for another confrontation in preparation for the coming rain (1 Kings 18:1).

The sinful conditions existing in Israel at that time included: faithlessness, idolatry, The LORD's commandments forsaken and the Phoenician's gods worshipped, spiritual lethargy (morbid drowsiness, unnatural prolonged slumber), wickedness, murder readily accepted, drought, and famine prevailed so that no food or grass could be found in all the land. Then the famine was blamed upon Elijah (Lev. 26:20,29). Can you see the likeness to many conditions today?

On his way to Samaria in very late 3237 A.C. or 890 B.C., Elijah met Ahab's God-fearing silent bondsman-servant, Obadiah, not the author of the prophecy of Obadiah written late in 3541 A.C. or 586 B.C. In the midst of the severe famine caused by drought, this worldly, political compromiser was more concerned about the animals perishing than his people perishing. Obadiah's name means a servant of Jehovah. But by occupation he served King Ahab as an honored bondsman elevated to governor over his house (18:3a). Obadiah feared The LORD greatly (v. 3b), a quality Ahab respected in spite of his wife, Jezebel. But Obadiah also greatly feared Ahab and Jezebel (vs. 4,9,14). He had acted secretly for God (v. 4) sneaking bread and water to feed a hundred fearful prophets hidden in two caves. Obadiah used his political position for The God when appropriate, but compromised his convictions.

Obadiah stood in connection with and served as a bondsman to king Ahab, the man on the lowest rung on the ladder of apostasy from The God. He labored in cooperation with the enemies of The God rather than speaking out for The God and encouraging Israel to repent and return to The God. Obadiah was a politician of mediating character. He was devoted to Ahab. He searched for grass to feed horses and mules rather than to be a faithful watchman to tell Ahab to repent and turn to The Lord (Ezek. 33:6,11).

A. The Rare Occasion of that Meeting (vs. 5-8).

1. Combing the Land for Meadow (vs. 5,6)

He along with Ahab indicated more concern for beasts than for people.

2. A Cold Formal Meeting (v. 7).

Obadiah fell on his face and addressed Elijah as "My lord, Elijah," indicating a distant but respectful relationship with Elijah.

3. A Correct Formal Greeting by Obadiah (v. 7), "Master (ahdôhn)" indicated a bondsman-master relationship between Obadiah and Ahab.

4. It Conveyed a Frank Message (v. 8).

Elijah commanded Obadiah to go and tell "thy lord," indicating that Obadiah had a bondsman relationship with Ahab. Obadiah's objective was to make life easier for himself and assist his fellow professing prophets to exist in hiding until the crisis ended.

What are we doing? What objective are we carrying out? What end do we have in view? Are we sowing **to the flesh?** or **to The Spirit?** (Gal. 6:8). Are we, as Obadiah was, working for merely earthly objects or possessions and an easier earthly life? Or really working for The Lord and Eternity to the end of our physical life? Do we have a **higher view** than selfish and worldly position and gain? Is Eternity really in view? Are we really working toward that end? Or are we like Obadiah?

B. The Reflected Opinion of Obadiah

1. Obadiah's Opinion of Himself (vs. 7-14):

a. He was uncertain of his stand before The God (v. 9a) - "Have I sinned?" (v. 9a).

b. He was unstable in his spiritual status (v. 9a) - "What have I sinned?" (v. 9a).

c. He was unsettled in Ahab's service (v. 9b) - He questioned Elijah's motive, thinking that Ahab will "slay me," when Elijah was merely obeying The Lord.

d. He felt unsafe in The God's service (vs. 9b,14).

If I tell the message to Ahab, then what will happen to me? Will he slay me? (vs. 9b,14). If he was a true bondsman prophet to The Lord, he would be perfectly safe. But in whom was his trust?

e. He was unsound in his thinking (vs. 9,12,14). He did not soundly think or rely upon The Lord or he would be trusting His protection. Nothing can harm a true, obedient bondsman of The Lord.

f. He was unsure of His acceptance by Elijah and well he should be (vs. 13,14). Obadiah was not accepted:

(1) As servant of The Lord (Jehovah)! "... but I fear The Lord from my youth. Was it not told ... what I did?" (vs. 12,13).

(2) As a trusted fellow-servant of Elijah (v. 14 cf. v. 12) Elijah understood him to mean, 'You will disappear again and Ahab will slay me.'

g. He was surprised that he was unrecognized in his service for The Lord (13). "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we

not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:22,23)

2. His Opinion of Ahab (deducted from Obadiah's own words and Ahab's actions):
 - a. A radical despot (v. 9b) -- he slew whoever displeased him;
 - b. A raging dictator (vs. 9c,14c) -- he reached to other kingdoms and nations to kill Elijah;
 - c. A repugnant dynast (vs. 10,12) -- he was an inconsistent, hostile, powerful ruler.Yet he was Obadiah's **lord** (8,10,11,14) with a master-bondsslave relationship, more powerful over him than The **LORD** Himself.
3. His Opinion of Elijah :
 - a. Uncertain - He'll disappear again (vs. 9,12,14),
 - b. Unreliable - He'll discredit me (vs. 9,12),
 - c. Uncomfortable / nonconformable - He disrupts the peace (cf. 17),
 - d. Undiplomatic - He disquiets the 'status quo',
 - e. Unnerving - He disturbs the lethargy.

C. The Reluctant Obedience to the Man of God (v. 16):

1. Arguments Answered:
 - a. Elijah may disappear again (v. 12);
 - b. Elijah's vow (v. 15);
2. Agreement to Action - Obadiah went to Ahab (v. 16a);
3. Announcement to Ahab
 - a. Obadiah told of Elijah's appearance (v. 16b);
 - b. Ahab did not slay Obadiah (v. 16c).
4. Absent from any further Scripture Accounts. There is not another mention of Obadiah in all of Scripture.

Conclusion:

Two God fearing men, one spiritual, one worldly. Elijah was a concerned servant of Jehovah (obedient and calm), an intruder to the 'status quo,' a protagonist (leader) in the cause of righteousness, a reformer with vitality and power, a provocation in the storm of controversy, totally dedicated to The God and His Christ, His heavenly, righteous, Eternal King. On the other hand Obadiah was a God-fearing, worldly compromiser, an opportunist, a man dedicated politically to his earthly, wicked, temporal king.

To whom or what are you dedicated? One or the other, you cannot partially serve each! Who is your true master and to whom do you serve as a bonds slave? The Lord Jesus Christ or Satan? Remember that Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Mt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13). Whom do you truly fear? The God or man? How distant are you from the bold servants of The Lord who speak out against sin, who disturb the seeming peaceful coexistence, and seek to arouse The God's people to revival and a positive stand for The God? Are you willing to be called a trouble-causer because you stand with The God, His Christ, and Righteousness? Or do you prefer to quietly and secretly follow The God nominally as Obadiah and the prophets of his day did? You can be fearing The God, sympathetic to The God's impotent professing servants, compromising with the ungodly for provision and possessions, giving token allegiance to The Lord Jesus Christ. Or like Elijah, you can stand alone, refuse to compromise for a moment for any

reason, but cry out against apostasy, lethargy, and rebellion against The God, totally dedicated to The God and The Lord Jesus Christ, your Heavenly, Righteous, Eternal King. Where will you stand? In whose court? Whom will you emulate? Obadiah or Elijah? (Heb. 13:12,13).

The God is looking for those who will not compromise, but will stand up for The Lord Jesus Christ and be counted, those who will speak out for The Christ and The God, and who will persist in keeping separate from the world? Who will stand out from the crowd? Who will say, you can count on me to persist faithful to death? (Heb. 13:12,13; 1 John 2:15-17).

Application:

What will you do in these days of apostasy, when The LORD's commandments are forsaken, when all kinds of gods are worshipped, when spiritual lethargy prevails, when wickedness and murder are readily accepted, and crime is rampant everywhere? Where will you stand for the rest of your life, beginning to day?