

Living for God in a Godless World

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 18.1-16.

Key Verse: “In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer;
 I have overcome the world.” John 16.33

This is a study in the life of Obadiah, friend of Elijah, not he who wrote the book. (There are at least thirteen men called Obadiah mentioned in the Old Testament). It is of particular interest to all who have had to live and witness for God as the only Christian in a godless community. It may be a school, or workplace, or the army, a logging camp, a prison, an hostel, nursing home or a hospital. It has been my experience on at least two occasions. Christians living under such conditions often develop survival techniques which may or may not accord to best biblical principles. The study of Elijah's Obadiah may help us to be effective as a Christian in a godless community.

First, Consider Obadiah's Situation.

He was the governor or chief steward of wicked King Ahab's household. To have held this position he must have been a man of ability. He lived and worked as a lone servant of God in the house of the leader of apostasy in Israel, and was daily in danger of his life. See vs 3 & 12. He was therefore a master of politic and diplomacy who knew human nature and how to manage people. He had a duty of service to Ahab See Romans 13.1-7, 1 Peter 2.17 and this often put him into a place of conflict. See Matthew 22.21. But he was able to balance these two demands on his life and witness. He was in the company of Joseph (Genesis 41.41), Daniel (Daniel 2.48), Mordecai (Esther 2.19) and those in Caesar's house (Philippians 4.22). Look up these men and their lives. Also countless

others who have lived for God in public office in difficult times through time.

Then, Consider Obadiah's Testimony.

He had served the Lord from His youth. Obadiah means ‘Servant of Jehovah’. It is probable that he was the product of a Godly home, but at least the habits of good conscience were formed in him early in life. Proverbs 22.6. and he had held to them, despite the problems (1 Timothy 1.19). Notice the word ‘from’ not ‘in’ in verse 12. His fear of God was greater than his fear of Ahab. Matthew 10.28.

Read his exploits in verse 13. During a purge by persecution by Queen Jezebel Obadiah hid one hundred prophets of the Lord in a cave and kept them supplied with bread and water. No mean effort requiring resources,

organization, knowledge, skill, and secrecy. It is probable that Obadiah did not perform this operation alone, but had the willing cooperation of others of like mind, whose availability and willingness he utilised. We see him as part of an underground Christian community known only to themselves and God. 1 Kings 19.9-18 & Romans 11.2-5. God has many who serve Him today, no matter how alone you feel.

Obadiah was available to God at great personal cost. When in v 8-16 Elijah required a service of him he explained the risk, he made known the cause of his fear, and he worked out with Elijah a strategy to meet the need. 1 Thessalonians 2.1-12. tells us that witness calls for tact and tactics as well as boldness. See also Colossians 4.5-6.

Strategies for Living as a Christian in a Godless Society. Many Christians are a poor witness in their community. Look for these qualities in the life story of Obadiah as we have studied him. This list is not comprehensive.

1. Establish a regular time for personal prayer and Bible reading. Set realistic minimum discipleship standards. Psalm 119.105-112, Colossians 3.1-3, 1 Thessalonians 5.17 Hebrews 3.1 (Consider means to observe, understand or discover - fix your mind)

2. Commit your way to the Lord daily and expect Him to lead you in it. Psalm 37.5, 1 John 2.6. Keep your own life true; no double standards, as people read you like a book. Philippians 2.15, 2 Corinthians 3.3, Ephesians 5.8

3. Become aware of the life style of the group in which you find yourself. Take these factors fully into account. Luke 16.1-12, John 4.35-39, Ephesians 5.15&16, 1 Thessalonians 4.11&12. Learn acceptable social standards and communication patterns. Colossians 4.2-6, Mark 1.17 (If you are going fishing, learn how to fish.)

4. Set up a support network with other Christians in the group, or if necessary in the wider world outside. Select people with whom you can pray and confer, and share problems. 3 John 3-8, 2 Thessalonians 3.1, Hebrews 10.24. Read of Paul's support network in such passages as Colossians 4.7-15.

5 Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in the lives of your associates. Look for and follow the signs of His working. 2 Corinthians 4.3-7, John 16.7-11, John 12.38-41, Luke 11.9.

6. Relax, uptight Christians make poor witnesses. Enjoy your life with these people for their own sake. Psalm 37.7, Matthew 6.31, 1 Peter 1.6-9. 1 Thessalonians 5.16. *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.”* Philippians 3.1

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