

Obadiah and Elijah

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon contrasts the cowardly Christian minister Obadiah with the fearless servant of God Elijah, highlighting the importance of standing against evil in high places.

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:1-16, Matthew 10:32, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Philippians 1:28, 2 Timothy 1:7, Hebrews 11:35, Revelation 2:20

Topics: "Faith And Courage", "Standing Against Apostasy"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches on the contrast between Obadiah, a secret disciple who compromised his faith for worldly favor, and Elijah, a fearless servant of God who stood against evil despite the risks. The lesson highlights the importance of unwavering faith and courage in the face of apostasy and idolatry, emphasizing the need to stand boldly for God's truth even when surrounded by corruption and persecution.

Transcript

(1 Kings xviii:1-16.)

I. The Analysis.

1. God's "Go" Precedes His "And I Will" (verses 1, 2). --This is seen also in the previous lesson. If God were a despot, as some men assert. His Word would be full of "go's," with no "and I will." A human monarch launches out a good many go's, but instead of and, he offers an or. In other words, the laws of the land are all attached to penalties, not to rewards. The laws of heaven are all attached to gracious promises. How much fallacious teaching along these lines has implanted in many a heart an unbiblical idea of God, our loving heavenly Father.

2. Secret Discipleship (verses 3-15).

3. The Lord and His Hosts Elijah's Cohort (verses 15, 16).--Elijah had no fear for his life, as Obadiah had, for unlike the latter, his faith, as in the previous lesson, was in a living God with unseen hosts at His command, and the outflow of such a faith is always an upright life, free from the fear of men. Oh for more men like Elijah to say in the face of danger,--of ridicule--of temptation--"the Lord" "before whom I stand."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

These two prophets of Jehovah in a day of apostasy and idolatry in Israel are not only strongly contrasted characters, but are representative of two classes of servants of God in every age. Both were sincere, both had the prophetic gift. But there the similarity ends and contrast begins.

Obadiah is a type of the Christian minister who sincerely loves the Lord, and who, within certain limitations, means to be loyal and true. But he cannot break with the world. Obadiah held an important office at the court of the vilest king who ever disgraced a throne. That court was dominated by Jezebel, a cruel idolater whose name has become in Scripture a symbol of persecution and corruption (Rev. ii:20). In that court the open confession of the name of Jehovah was impossible. When Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord (verse 13) it is evident that Obadiah was not suspected. On the other hand he evinced the reality of his secret discipleship by sheltering and sustaining an hundred of his fellow believers. But he could not give up his place of favor with its emoluments and influence, and take his place openly with God's fearless witnesses against evil in high places. A Jewish tradition asserts that when Jezebel caused the torture and death of the prophets of Jehovah, many who were unknown and unsuspected came forward to suffer with their brethren; and Saphir thought these were meant in Heb. xi:35, "not accepting deliverance," when Obadiah offered to secrete them. Such, then, was Obadiah --a man of sincere faith, but a truckling time-server, suppressing his profound convictions, and having no word of rebuke for the shameless idolatry about him.

What a contrast to all this is Elijah. Into that very court where Obadiah was selling his manhood and betraying his God through cowardice and ambition, came this stranger from Gilead with his stern message of the divine wrath and judgment. How Obadiah must have longed for courage to cast off his livery of shame and stand forth at whatever cost, as Elijah's co-witness. But he could not--he had sold his manhood for place and power.

What a day, too, of contrast between the religious worldling and the separated servant of God was that which followed this meeting of Obadiah and Elijah, when all Israel was gathered to Carmel for the contest between the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Jehovah's one fearless witness.

The "governor" of Ahab's court (verse 3) must have perceived that the real monarch that day was not the Jezebel-ruled Ahab, but the solitary Tishbite.

Such a contrast recurred in the morning of the Reformation between Erasmus and Luther. The satirical scholar was as little of a papist as the converted monk, but when Luther was delivering his shattering blows upon the citadel of the later Jezebel, he in vain summoned to his side the one man in all the world who could have helped him most. The same contrast recurs when, as to-day, there stand in the same age and with like convictions men who dare strike hard and straight at the monstrous covetousness which underlies every colossal fortune, every crushing trust, and the men who stand daily in the presence of the modern Ahabs, knowing well that they have taken the vineyard of many a helpless Naboth, but with craven hearts speak smooth things.

And the peculiar peril of all men of that type is, that they salve their consciences with some good deed which their position of favor with the world enables them to do. Have they not induced Croesus to found an orphanage, or endow a Christless college?

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