

1 Kings Ch 18:1-16

3 ½ yrs have passed from the reading of vs 1 of ch 17 to the reading of vs 1 of ch 18. And during that time God has been *disciplining* the nation, and *disciplining* Elijah. The governmental sanctioning of idol worship is in full effect, Ahab has done his best to eliminate the worship of the Lord and initiate and instigate the worship of Baal. And so God called Elijah to proclaim a drought until further notice, that it wouldn't rain a drop or even be as much as dew on the ground in the morning for a # of yrs until he spoke the word. And since Baal was looked to as a fertility god, this was a real slap in the face against him because God was in essence demonstrating the impotency and inability of Baal to do anything. There would be no fertilizing of the earth, famine would rule the land as the result of the people's forsaking of the Lord even as the Word of God had told them there would be even back in the establishing of the law. So God has had the *nation* under chastisement, under discipline, but *Elijah* has been taking a course in discipleship.

God has a further plan for Elijah's life. But before that *plan* and *purpose* can be accomplished, Elijah 1st must be *prepared*. So during these yrs he's been learning a few lessons, he's been being emptied of himself, cut on, trimmed back, pruned and prepared. He's had to learn what it means to be absolutely dependant upon God for his every need. What it means to trust God with all that you are, that unless God gives him this day (literally) his daily bread, he won't eat. God provided for him, protected him, and there was nothing that he could do for himself. He was at best simply an earthen channel through which God might flow, or through which God was *able* to flow should He so choose, but apart from God he could do nothing, apart from the Living Waters of the Holy Spirit he would dry up and become of no value to anyone just like that brook that he stayed at all those weeks, perhaps months or even a year or more.

But beyond the cutting back, carving on, and pruning that he endured, there was a further refining still that God wanted to do in his life. He learned that God will provide for us practically, but not always predictably. And God humbled him even more by causing his needs to be met at the hands of a gentile widow woman who was located at the very heart (geographically) of Baal worship there in Sidon. And God was refining Elijah, breaking him down, that he might be built up pure and ready for the work. You recall that Paul said that he had received such an abundance of revelations that he was given a thorn in the flesh lest he be exalted above measure. In other words, there was some sort of reoccurring hardship in his life (be it infectious eyes or malaria, or whatever) that kept him mindful of the fact of his humanity lest he begin to get puffed up and think that he was more than what in reality he was, which was simply a vessel through which God could flow. And this is the type of thing that Elijah has been undergoing, being made mindful of his humanity lest via the magnitude of the way God's going to use his life somehow deceive him into thinking that he's something more than he is. Apart from Christ we can do nothing, and God desires there to be that vital element of genuine humility in our lives so that He can use us to the full.

As I've said many times, humility equals usability, but pride will get you set aside, and because God wants to use our lives, He will break us down, cut us back, refine us, and empty us of ourselves that we might be filled to overflowing with Him. And then when God uses our lives we're careful to give Him all the glory because we know that in us, that is in our flesh, no good thing dwells. And if there's been a work, it's by God alone because we're completely incapable in our own strength.

Vs1-2

So far Elijah has been faithful to obey God's Word to a Tee, God told him to go to the Brook Cherith, he went, told him to go to a widow woman in Zarephath, he went, now He says, "Go present yourself to Ahab." and Elijah went to present himself to Ahab, God is looking for men and women, young people, old people (doesn't matter) but who are willing to yield to His Word and be obedient to His direction for their lives. God wants to use your life, but if you're unwilling to yield your life to Him, how can He use it? When God says, "Go here" we're not to ask questions, or seek explanations, we just go, if He says, "Now do this," we just do that. And we could spend all night looking at various scriptures whereby God has given us explicit instructions to *do* this, or *not to do* that, but the principle is obvious, we're to be obedient to the Word of God. If Elijah would've heard God's Word, and not been obedient to God's Word, would God have been able to use his life? No, and he'd have been foolish to think otherwise, what did James say? "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*" James 1:22-25 You want God to use your life, and bless your life? Then do what He says, be obedient to His Word.

Now earlier (Ch17) we read where God had told Elijah to hide away *from* Ahab. Now he's to present himself *to* Ahab, there are times to be "hidden out" with God, to be tucked away *from* the world. Be it to be cut on and refined, or perhaps to be refocused, refreshed, recharged so to speak, but then there are also times that we're to present ourselves *to* the world. To be out there sharing God's Word, allowing God to use your life, flow through your life, letting your light so shine that men see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven. Both are vital elements to our walk, we see Jesus encouraging His disciples both ways. In Mark Ch 6 we read, "*And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.*" Mark 6:7 He did it again with the 70, He would send them out into the world to minister, obviously we're called to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that He has commanded us. But then we read later on in that same chapter, "*Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.'*" Mark 6:30-31

Of course they were interrupted by the multitude and then you have the feeding of the 5,000, but we read in John's Gospel ch 18 that Jesus took His disciples *often* into the closed quarters of the private Garden of Gethsemane, just to spend time with them alone. So we see a balance, both are needed, there are those who just want to stay hidden away, but there comes a time to move out. There are others who always want to be on the move when the time hasn't arrived to go. You see the key element in both of these things in Elijah's life is that he was *led by* God, and responding to the *direction of* God in both cases for his life. He was sensitive to God's leading, he was real fine staying put until God told him to move, but when God told him to move, he didn't delay, he responded immediately, what does the bible say? "*Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*" 1 Tim 6:6 If God has me on spiritual house arrest for a season, or for whatever reason wants me to stay put, out of the sphere of the public eye, or just hanging out being fed, establishing some roots for a deeper work that perhaps He may have for me in the future, than I'm to be content in that. If He desires to move me out onto the frontlines, I'm not to whine and gripe about that, my answer is, "Yes sir." When You say move, I'll move, when you say stay, I'll stay, whenever, however, wherever, and to whatever degree You want to use my life, I'm just available to You and content in Your will, done Your way in my life.

Paul told the Philippians, "*I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Phil 4:11-13

Now catch that word, "learned" contentment is not a natural thing, but through the strength of Christ in my life I can be there. Elijah was there, when God said, "Stay," he stayed, when God said, "Go" he went.

God was the One calling the shots, Elijah was just His vessel, notice it there in vs 1. God says, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth." Elijah was the one *praying*, but God was the One *providing* the results, and we see 2 things about God's Word here that impacted Elijah's life in a positive way. #1 "It gave him an emboldened walk," and #2 We'll see next time, "It empowered his prayers." God gave Elijah a promise, and it was the premise of this promise that imparted to Elijah the boldness to move forward in his walk, and confidence in the power of his prayers. He is now moving in the confidence of the promise of the Word of God. God is going before him, making his path straight, ordaining his day, and because he's moving in the *promise* of the Word of God, he has every confidence in the *power* of God to take care of his life. He's not afraid, Ahab wants to kill him, but God has made him a promise, and that puts him in that Ps 56 frame of mind, "*In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?*" Ps 56:11 and Again Ps 118:6, "*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*" It's like Paul told the Romans, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" Rom 8:31 So God made him a promise and he took God for His Word and acted upon it. As was mentioned a minute ago God is just looking for people who are willing to take Him for His Word and act upon it.

But then 2^{ndly} we'll see next time how this promise gave him confidence in the power of his prayers. He knew what God was going to do, God had given him His Word, and so when he took to his knees there was an *expectation* that God would move. Not because of anything he had to say, but because of what God had *already said*. And Prayer, *predicated* on the *promise* of God's Word is *powerful* and effective. Well, Elijah went to present himself to Ahab and we read in vs 3

Vs3-4

So vs 3 tells us that Obadiah feared the Lord *greatly*, and vs 4 tells us how that fear translated into his life on a certain level *practically*. Underline there in vs 3 where we read, "Obadiah feared the Lord greatly." This is such a key in life, the fear of God is such a healthy thing for you and me spiritually, and physically, it keeps us out of trouble and walking uprightly. And because Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, he did what was right even though it may've well cost him his life. The bible says, "*The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.*" Prov 29:25 Obadiah lived that out, had his fear primarily been of Ahab or Jezebel, it would've been a snare to him, a point of compromise, but because he feared God more he did the right thing. It doesn't say that he didn't fear the king at all, we'll see quite the contrary, but he feared God more, and therein lies the key. The fear of man only brings a snare; the fear of God brings assurance and security. Prov 14:26 "*In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge.*" Jesus issued the proper perspective when He said, "...do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt 10:28 That was Obadiah, sure he had fear of the king, but he feared God more and that governed his life in righteousness. The fear of God will breed holiness in your life. But with the absence of that fear comes chaos, and a lack of self-control, a lack of self-restraint, and in its place is self-indulgence. The fear of the Lord is a healthy thing.

Let me throw out at you a # of scriptures regarding the fear of the Lord.

Prov 14:27, "*The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.*" All of these are from the Proverbs, "*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way*

And the perverse mouth I hate." Prov 8:13 "*Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.*" Prov 15:16 "*The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.*" Prov 15:33

"*In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.*" Prov 16:6 "*The fear of the LORD leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.*" and Finally, Prov 23:17-18 "*Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day; For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off.*"

You see if you fear God you're not going to do things that will jeopardize your spiritual well being. You're going to be careful to make the right decisions, to not deviate from the narrow path which leads to life, because you fear God. You're not going to look at certain things, partake in certain things, or associate yourself in ways that will compromise your integrity and upright standing before the Lord. So the fear of God guides you in wisdom, preserves you from those things that would otherwise be a snare to you.

Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, and because of that he took care of the prophets of God practically. He could've sat idly by and watched them all be murdered, but he feared how God would hold him accountable for that, so in a time of famine, and great peril for the believer. He took these guys, and by his own means, through his own resources he #1 protected them, and #2 provided for them. He may not have been a prophet personally, but he was a huge profit to the prophets. And even as God had protected and provided for Elijah, even so Obadiah via the fear of God, protected and provided for these prophets. No small feat in the midst of a severe famine to pay for the meals of 100 men everyday. And even though he wasn't called to be a prophet, or a preacher/teacher evangelist, I'll guarantee his reward will be great because even though he wasn't the one behind the pulpit, or sharing at crusades, he got behind the ministry of these men practically so that they might be sustained in their work. He prayed for them, protected them, provided for them, and God knew it. Remember when David was returning to Ziklag with his army and found that the Amalekites had burned it with fire and taken every one of the women and children captive. And so they pursued them, but the journey was wearisome. And 200 of his men went so far and they couldn't go any farther, and so they lightened the load, stayed with the supplies and the rest carried on. Well to make a long story short David overtook the Amalekites; got everything back plus everything the Amalekites had. And so when they returned to the men guarding the supplies there was a number of men who said, "They didn't do the work practically, they're not getting any of the spoil personally." and David said, "*...as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.*" 1 Sam 30:24 You may not be called to be a missionary, or a pastor/teacher, or an evangelist, but you can stay by the supplies, you can support them in prayer, or get behind them in practical provision by giving to the work of the Lord. Obadiah was no prophet, but he was a huge profit to the prophets, because of his faithfulness to the Lord in supporting these guys, they were able to carry on in the calling of God to their lives.

Now there's one more quick observation here. There are people who at times find themselves faced with a concern over their employment position. Perhaps they're working for a man who is ungodly, or an organization that stands for things they don't. And the company, or individual isn't forcing them to compromise their personal position, but they're not sure if it's really right to be working for someone, or some company that's obviously so ungodly. Now I'm not speaking about being a bartender or something that forces you to compromise.

But perhaps you work for a contractor who's an unbeliever, or you're a secretary of an individual who's anything but godly, and you're just not sure if that's ok.

Obadiah couldn't have worked for a more-wicked individual, of all the kings of Israel; Ahab was undoubtedly, emphatically the worst, adamantly against the worship of Yahweh, even seeking to eradicate it from the nation. Setting up idolatry, giving government funding to the pagan priesthood, just a very base and wicked man. Yet there was Obadiah right there in the king's court. God had one of His own on the inside, and because of that some of God's prophets were saved alive, he was serving the Lord even in the court of the king who was seeking to abolish anything that had to do with the Lord. (His name means servant of Yahweh, and that's what he did). Joseph would be another great example, working for Pharaoh yet sold out to the Lord. Paul said that there were all kinds of people right there in Caesar Nero's palace who loved Jesus Christ So we see that God would have us to be *in* the world, just not of the world, and as long as you can serve the Lord faithfully, not being forced to compromise your convictions biblically, then you just be as diligent as you can be for the man who's paying you to get a certain job done. Obadiah wasn't being paid to share his faith verbally, he was paid to get a job done, and he did it well, and in that he was promoted to being Ahab's right hand man in many respects of the word. Ahab wanted someone he could trust to go with him to look for some land, Obadiah was the man, he was in charge of all of Ahab's house, because he was a faithful steward. You see you are the light of the world, and with out a light how are people that are in darkness going to see? So as to where Elijah was called to *exhort* Ahab, Obadiah, living in the palace, was called to be an *example* to Ahab. Again, people need both, they need to *hear* it, and they need to *see* it. (Well, that's a little parenthetical information on Obadiah)

Vs5

One quick word. It's sad to see that after these years Ahab hadn't learned a thing, instead of seeking God, he's just seeking grass, not wanting to have to kill them. He could just repent and turn to the true and living God, but instead he'll waste his time and energy exhausting every other resource yet never turning to God. How typical is that, people exhausting every other resource when everything is drying up around them, yet they won't turn to the Lord.

Vs6

I don't want to over spiritualize anything, but that's always the way it is between the man who fears God, and the man who doesn't, the man who fears God will go one way, and the man who doesn't will go just the opposite. But Obadiah is having his steps ordered *of* the Lord because he trusts *in* the Lord, so we see here.

Vs7-14

"Look Elijah, nothing personal, but you're a wanted man! and Ahab has conducted an exhaustive search for you, even internationally, (he obviously wanted to kill Elijah for the drought that's been imposed upon the land via his prayers) and now you want me to waltz over there with *out* you and say that I've *found* you? If the Spirit whisks you away, and I had you in my sights he's going to kill me! Is there sin in my life that you're asking me to take this chance? I'll be held accountable for letting you get away."

Vs15

This is how he began his conversation with Ahab, “As the Lord lives before whom I stand,” “Listen Obadiah, as God as my witness, Ahab will see my face this day.” You couldn’t ask for a stronger affirmation.

Vs16

Be sure to tune in next week, and brace yourself for the exciting conclusion of the battle of the gods, same bat time, same bat channel, lets pray. (Time to be hid away, time to present yourself, obeying God’s Word, boldness in our walk, power in our prayer, the fear of the Lord principally/practically, seek God in time of need not the “grass” perishable things of this world)