

A Godly Man in an Ungodly Place

1 Kings 18:1-19

¹ And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.” ² So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria. ³ And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. ⁴ For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.) ⁵ And Ahab had said to Obadiah, “Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock.” ⁶ So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

⁷ Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, “Is that you, my lord Elijah?”

⁸ And he answered him, “It is I. Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’”

⁹ So he said, “How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? ¹⁰ As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, ‘He is not here,’ he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. ¹¹ And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, “Elijah is here.”’ ¹² And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. ¹³ Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD’s prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? ¹⁴ And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, “Elijah is here.”’ He will kill me!”

¹⁵ Then Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.”

¹⁶ *So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.*

¹⁷ *Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?”*

¹⁸ *And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals.*

¹⁹ *Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”*

—1 Kings 18:1–19

Read 1 Kings 18:1–19

When we see wicked kings, presidents, rulers, governors, and bosses come to power, we tend to wrongly conclude that God is not working, has vacated His post, doesn’t care about the situation, or is unable to work. All such conclusions are wrong! God is always working. Even in the most ungodly administrations, God has positioned His own servants in key positions. He uses His servants to influence, intercede, and interrupt the proliferation of evil. This principle is evidenced throughout the Bible and especially in the lives of Joseph, Esther, Daniel, and Nehemiah.

In 1 Kings 18:1–19, we are introduced to Obadiah, the palace administrator. Obadiah, like Joseph, Esther, Daniel, and Nehemiah, had faith in God but was working in an ungodly administration. God used Obadiah in this influential place.

Perhaps you have been tempted to conclude that God is without representation in certain administrations or industries. Think again! God continues to position those who have faith in Him in the most unlikely places to influence, intercede, and interrupt the proliferation of evil. You might even be one of those whom God has called to such a place, or you might know of someone whom God has called. We need to recognize that God is at work and pray for those whom God has placed in these key positions.

As you reread 1 Kings 18:1–19, take some time to empathize with the difficulty and desperation that Obadiah faced as a godly man working for an evil king.

1. Use 1 Kings 18:1–2 to note the following:
 - a. The duration of the famine
 - b. God's instruction to Elijah
 - c. The promise of God
 - d. Elijah's obedience
 - e. The condition of Israel's capital, Samaria
2. From 1 Kings 18:3–6 remark on Obadiah's:
 - a. Office
 - b. Spirituality
 - c. Heroism
 - d. Assignment from Ahab

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

*A crisis isn't what makes a person; a crisis shows what a person is made of.*⁴

—Warren Wiersbe

3. Write down any insights you gather from Obadiah's encounter with Elijah using the following verses:
 - a. Verse 7
 - b. Verse 8
 - c. Verse 9
 - d. Verse 10
 - e. Verse 11
 - f. Verse 12
 - g. Verse 13
 - h. Verse 14
 - i. Verse 16
4. What assurance did Elijah offer to Obadiah? 1 Kings 18:15

- a. What does this declaration convey to you about the prophet Elijah?
5. Use the interaction between Ahab and Elijah found in 1 Kings 18:17–18 to comment on:
 - a. Ahab's accusation
 - b. What Ahab had done and what his actions caused for Israel
 6. Answer the following questions concerning Elijah's directive to Ahab in 1 Kings 18:19:
 - a. Who was to gather?
 - b. Where were they to gather?
 - c. How many prophets of Baal were to be there?
 - d. How many prophets of Asherah?
 - e. What was the status of these prophets in Ahab's administration?

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Ahab accused Elijah of being the *Troubler of Israel*, a title formerly given to Achan in Joshua 6–7. Elijah's claim is that the trouble has spiritual roots from disobedience to God.

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Asherah is a generic name for any divine consort of any fertility god, but can also be a title or name for a particular goddess.⁵

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

The Obadiah mentioned in this passage is not the writer of the book of Obadiah. His name means “a servant of the Lord,” which is interesting because he was the servant of Ahab.

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Mount Carmel is a range of mountains near Haifa that extends 13 miles long. It is also mentioned in early Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts.⁶

7. From 1 Kings 18:1–19 share any thoughts you have concerning:
 - a. Obadiah’s situation
 - b. Obadiah’s faith
 - c. Obadiah’s obedience
8. What is your greatest takeaway from 1 Kings 18:1–19?

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

God continues to work even when ungodly leaders are in power. Elisabeth Elliot made a profound observation in a letter she wrote just after FDR had passed away and Truman was expected to succeed him: *“A good start—maybe he won’t be so bad after all. [A professor] had just said last Monday that he could think of nothing worse that could possibly happen to the U.S. than if Truman were to have been elected. And now this! We never know how God will use it.”⁷*