

### Elijah and Obadiah Meet - Focus: Partial Commitment

#### 1 Kings 18:7-15

1 Kings 18:7-15 – *“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?’ And he answered him, ‘It is I. Go, tell your master, Elijah is here.’”*

*So he said, ‘How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? 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. And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here!’” 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. 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? And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’” He will kill me!’” Then Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.”*

#### Background Notes

In 1 Kings 18:7, Elijah suddenly met Obadiah on the road. (Remember - this was not the prophet Obadiah! This Obadiah was King Ahab’s chief servant.) This was not a pleasant meeting. When they met along the way, Obadiah was out searching for grass for Ahab’s horses because of the severe famine and drought, and Elijah was coming from Zarephath in Phoenicia. King Ahab had introduced Baal worship into the land, but Obadiah was a secret believer in the one true God. He recognized Elijah, and called out, *“Is that you, my lord Elijah?”*

It’s hard to miss the point in Elijah’s answer. Verse 8: *“It is I. Go, tell your master, Elijah is here.”* In other words, Elijah said: Listen Obadiah, don’t refer to *me* as your “lord” - or your “master.” **Your** master, Obadiah, is **Ahab!**

Elijah told Obadiah to go and tell King Ahab that Elijah had returned. Ahab had searched far and wide for Elijah, but couldn’t find him: *“As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you”(v10)*. Obadiah began to make excuses and give reasons why he shouldn’t tell Ahab that Elijah had returned. He was afraid to announce Elijah’s presence, because Elijah might disappear again? Then angry King Ahab would surely kill Obadiah!

Ahab and Jezebel had instituted an international search for Elijah, but they couldn’t find him. Why not? Because God was protecting Elijah. God can protect us as well - from all kinds of threats. Do you trust God in that way?

Elijah had been staying with a poor widow in Phoenicia, Jezebel's home territory. Who would have thought that Elijah would remain undetected there? I think we see a glimpse of God's sense of humor here! Imagine Ahab and Jezebel searching all over the place for Elijah, and meanwhile Elijah wasn't even hiding. He was just going about his normal business, living at the home of the poor widow. He was in plain sight in Phoenicia, Jezebel's home territory - and yet God was fully able to protect Elijah.

Verses 4 and 13 reveal that that Jezebel had actually killed a number of prophets of the Lord. Most likely, she did this in an attempt to appease the pagan gods she worshiped, thinking that false gods could make the rain return. Remember, Baal was thought to be the god that controlled the fertility of the land, including sending rain.

## Doctrinal Point

### **Partial commitment has telltale symptoms.**

Obadiah was a secret believer. Even though Obadiah "greatly feared the Lord," and even though he had hidden and fed 100 prophets of the Lord from Jezebel, yet he was not a fully committed believer. Remaining in the royal court of an apostate like wicked Ahab, who was promoting idolatry throughout the land, was not a sign of full commitment.

Obadiah was not a captive or a slave. He didn't have to continue to work for wicked King Ahab and the evil Queen Jezebel. He could have left their employment. God did not need a compromising Obadiah to protect His prophets. God could have protected them in a number of different ways. In fact, some commentators have said that those prophets probably shouldn't have been hiding in caves anyway!

In any case, I believe we see some symptoms of Obadiah's partial commitment in this chapter. Here are some telltale symptoms of partial commitment:

#### **1. A guilty conscience.**

The first telltale symptom of partial commitment is a guilty conscience. After Elijah's greeting, Obadiah said, "*How have I sinned?*" Obadiah didn't have a clear conscience. A guilty conscience is a telltale symptom of partial commitment.

#### **2. A loss of courage.**

Another telltale symptom of partial commitment is a loss of courage. Three times in these verses that we've read, Obadiah said, "I'll get killed!" That doesn't sound like someone who is fully relying on the Lord for protection and strength, does it? In Philippians 1:21 the apostle Paul said, "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!*" What was the difference? Paul was fully committed; Obadiah was partially committed.

### 3. A “rest on your laurels” mentality.

A third telltale symptom of partial commitment is a “rely on your past record” mentality, but not doing much for the Lord in the present. Verses 12-13: *“But I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth. 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?”*

When Obadiah reported his past record and good works to Elijah, he apparently thought that Elijah would be pleased with him. He may have thought Elijah would say, “Okay Obadiah, you’ve done enough. You don’t have to risk your life again. You’re off the hook for announcing my arrival to Ahab.”

### 4. A lack of trust.

A fourth telltale symptom of partial commitment is a lack of trust. Obadiah didn’t trust Elijah! Elijah had told Obadiah to announce his arrival - but Obadiah said: *“I don’t know where the Spirit of the Lord may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn’t find you, he will kill me.”* Can you believe it? Obadiah was saying, “Elijah, you’re not really going to be true to your word!” Obadiah didn’t trust the word of Elijah, the prophet of the Lord! This also showed a lack of trust in the Lord.

Do any of those symptoms apply to us today? Are we fully committed - or have we slipped back into the partially committed category? All of us should ask ourselves these four questions: Do I have a guilty conscience? Do I show a loss of courage? “Well, I tend to run scared; I don’t want to witness anymore.” That’s a telltale symptom of partial commitment. Do I exhibit a “rest on your laurels” mentality? Am I always trying to justify my lack of commitment by telling people what I’ve done for the Lord in the past? And do I have a tendency to lack trust in my fellow believers? There are some believers that you can’t trust all the time, but a characteristic of partial commitment is that you just don’t trust anyone - even fellow believers who have proven themselves.

We may **think** that we’re fully committed, but the answers to these four questions can be quite convicting. Remember, partial commitment has telltale symptoms.

## Practical Application

### God will test our commitment to Christ.

Why did Elijah meet Obadiah on the road and ask him to announce his arrival to King Ahab? Do you think it was just a coincidence? Obadiah just happened to be out looking for grass - and here comes Elijah from Zarephath? Did they “just happen” to meet? I don’t think this was coincidence. This was a test of Obadiah’s commitment!

Elijah could have gone directly to King Ahab, as he did the first time. He didn't need to have Obadiah announce his arrival. It was a test of Obadiah's commitment. Would Obadiah risk his life to announce the arrival of Elijah? Would Obadiah let it be known at this time that he was a believer, or that he would remain a secret believer? His commitment was being tested.

God will test our commitment to Christ. I remember my first night in an army barracks with a group of ROTC cadets that had no love for God. And there I was. Would I be a secret believer - or would I let it be known that I was a Christian? Would I be willing to read my Bible openly? Would I let it be known that I pray? Not flaunting Christianity, or making a big deal of it. Just going about my normal, another day-at-the-office routine of openly reading my Bible and praying.

It was a test of my commitment. I thank the Lord for His help at that time! And I wish I could say I have passed all my tests of commitment as well as I did that time. And you can be sure that God will test your commitment to Christ. Has your commitment to the Lord been tested lately on your job, or in your community?

A few weeks ago I was talking to a university student. He's a Christian who attends a secular school, with non-believers all around. Two years ago he took a course with a non-Christian professor, but he never let the professor or the other students know that he was a Christian. He wanted to, but he felt intimidated by the professor. He failed that test of commitment.

But recently he bought a Christian book, went back to the professor to tell him that he is a Christian. He gave the book to the professor, and asked would the professor please read it? The student asked me to pray about the results. Let me tell you, that young man should be encouragement to all of us! Sometimes we fail our tests of commitment, but God doesn't give up on us!

I'd like to believe that Obadiah passed this test of commitment. Verse 16 says, *"So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah."*

James 1 and 1 Peter 1 teach us that our faith in Christ definitely will be tested. God will test our commitment to Christ.