

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

by

F. W. Krummacher, D. D.

Copyright © 1880

CHAPTER FIVE

ELIJAH AND OBADIAH

“**He must increase, but I must decrease,**” said John Baptist to his disciples, when he perceived with regret that their mistaken partiality would have placed him above Jesus, whom John had preceded only as a harbinger and herald proclaiming repentance. He assured them that he himself was only the friend of the bridegroom; that his office was only to awaken the attention of the spiritual bride to the coming of her Beloved, and that having done this, his work was ended.

He added, “**The friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease**” (John, 3:29, 30).

The Baptist, in using these two last expressions, compares his Lord to the great luminary of day, but himself to its harbinger or morning star, whose light gradually decreases as the sun arises, till at length it vanishes altogether. Nor has he a wish to be anything more. He would gladly see himself forsaken by his own disciples, if they will only betake themselves to the chief Shepherd, to participate in that salvation which is to be found only with him. “**He must increase, but I must decrease.**” The Baptist meant that he must decrease, not only in *person reputation*, but also in *office*. His own office was only to bring men to Christ, by ushering in the sweet sound of the Gospel.

That the Messiah would come with help and salvation to sinners, John’s disciples knew; some but of them seemed erroneously to imagine that the repentance in which they were exercised, and the life of poverty and austerity which they led, that their fastings, self-denials, and prayers, if they did not possess some atoning power, had in them, at least, something which was to outweigh sin, and the curse belonging to it. Rigid followers as they were of John the Baptist, they had not yet been baptized unto Jesus Christ—baptized unto his death. But John, their master, would teach them that they must die more completely—that they must plunge themselves deeper into free grace. “**I,**” said he, “**must decrease.**”

“All that I have enjoined upon you—repentance, self-denial, fasting, and prayer—must lose all credit with you as any ground of God’s reconciliation to you. Ye must seek this in Jesus alone.”

“**He must increase.**”

Now in this declaration of the Baptist is comprised the whole mystery of practical religion. Does anyone ask what he must do to be saved? The answer is, “Thou must decrease, and Christ must increase;” comply with this, and thou shalt be saved.

- Does anyone inquire wherein consists the Christian’s sanctification? It consists in this, that Christ increases in us and we decrease.

- Does anyone desire to know whether he is advancing in the way of salvation? Observe whether Christ increases, while you decrease, in your own estimation.

By nature we are great—Jesus little; we are strong—Jesus weak. We cannot allow Jesus to be the only Saviour, the Alpha and Omega. The excellency of the power is ours—not his; we take carnal reasoning for our guide, instead of the simple Word and Spirit of God; salvation is looked for in self-love, not in the Saviour alone. But when the Word of the truth of the Gospel effectually penetrates the darkness of our understandings and the blindness of our hearts, the case is reversed.

The “**strong man armed**” is now become weak; and what appeared so weak before, is felt to be strong, yea, irresistible. The Sun of righteousness now arises upon us with healing in his wings, and we learn more and more to rejoice in his light alone, own strength, virtue, and excellency are things we can no longer bear to hear of. We love to lie humbled before the throne of grace, and to wait for a renewed sense of Divine love, even as “**they that watch for the morning.**” We now decrease and Jesus has increased with us.

It is natural to suppose that those who have been so thoroughly humbled in repentance and faith, are not likely any more to be puffed up with self-righteousness and vanity. But experience shows that this is a mistaken notion. For the “old Adam” is never entirely dead; though dying as a crucified malefactor, it can still revive and do unutterable mischief.

Yea, many a one, even after his conversion, has built anew the things which had been destroyed: he has been permitting himself to increase, and Christ to decrease. To mention only a few examples of this falling away—one increases by his ascetic exercises; another, by the enlargement of his knowledge; another in self-complacency, borrowed from his own influential popularity or the extent of his beneficent exertions; another thinks much of his own devotional feeling and of I know not what besides. In such things a man insensibly grows so pious and holy, that these things become gain to him, and are no longer accounted loss for Christ.

Are we not, then, to increase in sanctification? Yes! Grow as the palm-tree; but in self-estimation we must ever be only as the hyssop on the wall; we must daily become less and less, weaker and weaker in our own eyes, feeling more and more in want of the Lord’s staff for our support; otherwise we have set out in a wrong direction. Children of God must “**grow up into him in all things who is the Head, even Christ.**”

The beloved of the Lord, those who are really led by the Spirit of God, are ever gradually descending in self-humiliation. An exemplification of these introductory remarks will be found in the portion of Elijah’s history which we now proceed to consider.

“And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

“And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

“And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

“And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

“And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah” (I Kings 18:1-16)

We have now to accompany the prophet once more into the stormy theatre of public life.

- I. We find him, at the commandment of the Lord, departing from Zarephath.
- II. We learn what was passing at this time in the court of Samaria;
- III. We have the meeting of Elijah and Obadiah.

I. The prophet had been tWoe years and some months at Zarephath

The text expresses the time as **“many days,”** though they seemed perhaps to Elijah but a few. But, when we consider how rapidly storms and troubles have generally succeeded each other, in the experience of God's most eminent servants, it was a long time for Elijah to have a serene sky, with the exception of some fleeting clouds, for more than tWoe years together. For this was a length of tranquility with which not many of the active servants of God have been privileged.

In such a season of spiritual as well as natural dearth, Elijah must surely have felt as we should do in having to quit, perhaps forever, this peaceful abode of a pious friend. For the cloud of adversity had burst in blessings on that humble dwelling.

The widow, as we have seen, had become to him a real sister in the Lord, of one mind with him, in the truest and holiest acceptance; they enjoyed mutual fellowship in God, and in his word of atonement; and who shall say that Divine grace had not already begun to appear in the widow's child, restored as he had now been from death itself? From that moment, perhaps, he had begun to live indeed.

“The word of the Lord,” however, **“came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself to Ahab.”**

Thus things may be frequently contrary to our natural inclinations; but these inclinations are as often but of little worth. Our gracious God has better intentions concerning us, than we can have for ourselves. We should therefore follow the leadings of his providence at every step, and confide in God as all-wise and good, that he will not and cannot deceive us. **“He is a rock, his work is perfect; all his ways are judgment”** (Deuteronomy 32:4).

“Go, show thyself unto Ahab.”

Had Elijah now conferred with flesh and blood, this would have seemed to him like a command to plunge into the raging waves of the sea, or to walk into a lion's den. He had to present himself to a wicked and idolatrous king, a tyrant armed with despotic power, whose personal enmity against him had been increasing for at least three years and a half, and had been doubly aggravated by the distress of the country, of which Elijah was reputed to be the author.

During all this time had Ahab been intent upon apprehending him; had used every effort to trace out his residence; had searched through his own as well as all the neighboring states, and had taken an oath from the different tribes and governments that they had not found him; and yet all his efforts had been unavailing. How vexatious to himself, and what a reflection upon absolute power! If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what had Elijah to expect from such a king as Ahab? And yet he receives the brief and positive direction, **“Go, show thyself unto him!”**

But let no one suppose that the Lord ever expects what is above human nature from any of his children, without imparting, at the same time, sufficient grace and strength for the purpose. Let no one; therefore, imagine that he requires us to fight a fight of faith without giving us faith to do so; or that he will lead us into any difficulty and trial without making provision for our support and encouragement.

Yea, even should there be forced from us the agonizing cry **“Why hast thou forsaken me?”** he will enable us to prefix to it by appropriating faith **“My God! My God!”** which will be enough to keep us from sinking.

He leads none of his children into the valley of the shadow of death without becoming to them their rod and staff. Besides, however thick the darkness may be, it is always relieved by some little ray of light.

The support he gave to Abraham in his gloomy way to Mount Moriah, was not only by the general belief that whatever God does, he does well; but by the particular turn given to Abraham's faith, that God would restore his Isaac again to life. This sweetened his three days' journey not a little.

To Job was given a peculiarly clear and joyful expectation of the final result of his sufferings and of the day of resurrection. **"I know,"** said he, **"that my redeemer liveth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."** Such a visitation preserved his spirit.

And thus Elijah, on this arduous path of faith, which directed him to Ahab, was supported by the promise, **"I will send rain upon the earth."** He could therefore thank God and take courage. He could depart from Zarephath as a messenger of joy, and carry a blessing with him. Yes, though the horrors of drought and famine, though faces emaciated with hunger and thirst might well have made him shudder on the way; though the thought of Ahab's deadly resentment, and perhaps of an infuriated populace, might well have forced its way upon his mind, he could be cheered by the assurance of his commission to announce the return of rain, and by the hope that many would at length give up their hateful idolatry, and humble themselves before the God of their fathers. Such hopes and prospects we can easily imagine would at least have rendered his painful duty more tolerable.

"Show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."

The Lord had condescendingly commissioned his prophet to announce the chastisement of drought upon the land, and even to say, **"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, there shall not he dew nor rain these years *but according to my word*"** and now, therefore, it was to be at Elijah's word that the dew and rain should return. Had these blessings returned without Elijah's mediation, it would of course have been concluded that Elijah was a false prophet and a boaster; the priests of Baal would have attributed the deliverance to their idol, and would have praised Baal as triumphant over God.

In order, therefore, not to miss the sole object of this grievous visitation, and that Baal might be confounded and the Lord glorified, it was indispensably necessary that Elijah, by a public word, should remove the drought as a complete proof that his Lord was the true and the living God. Consequently, it was now **"Go, show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."**

"And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab." We see, then, the man of God again entering with firm step on his public career of faith, surrounded by a thousand temporal dangers and difficulties, as he had been proscribed as an outlaw throughout the nation, yea, as a troubler of Israel; nevertheless, he went at the commandment of the Lord and the power of the Lord was with him.

II. While Elijah was on his way from Zarephath, king Ahab, at Samaria, was also setting out on a journey through the land.

Elijah's errand was for the honor of the Lord his God; that of Ahab was for his cattle, particularly for his horses and mules. This occasion makes us acquainted with another very pleasing and interesting character, namely, with *Obadiah*, a man of high rank, holding the office of chamberlain or steward of the king's household. Hence what is here written of Him is the more remarkable, that "**he feared the Lord greatly.**"

If our discovery of a devout widow in a heathen land, between Tyre and Zidon, occasions our grateful admiration, how much more pleasing is our surprise to find a real servant of the Lord retained in one of the most scandalously corrupt courts ever noticed in history!

Here we see that godliness is not a plant which, as many suppose, must necessarily be reared in the conservatories of human education, admonition, and good example; how, then, could a godly man have existed in Samaria? The children of God are not the mere creatures of circumstances; the state of things in Samaria was just adapted to form Obadiah and everyone else into a child of the devil. The Lord "**forms a people for himself, to show forth his praise,**" when and where it pleaseth him, as Isaiah 43:18-21. As "**He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy,**" and is gracious to whom he will be gracious; so, whoever desires to be as Obadiah, the Lord's servant, cannot be prevented by unfavorable circumstances from becoming so. Thus the fear of God, faith and adoption, are the good part that cannot be taken away by thieves that break through and steal, neither devoured by moth and rust, nor merged and lost in the iniquities of the country we live in. Obadiah was enabled to keep that good thing which was committed to him, though in an earthen vessel, safely amidst all these dangers.

It was greatly that he feared the Lord. This is indeed a noble testimonial concerning him, for truly it was something great to fear the Lord with all his heart, at a time and in a country wherein the true worshipers of the Lord were exposed to public scorn and derision. It was also something great to adhere faithfully to the Lord, when surrounded by persons bitterly prejudiced against real godliness, and by religious and political institutions set up in direct opposition to the true worship and service of God. To abide in the faith, at a court where the god of this world had blinded the eyes of those in power and influence, and had thus spread every snare and net, every possible temptation to fall away, every possible incentive to vice and iniquity—this was surely something great in Obadiah; especially as he occupied a post of honor and responsibility which drew so many eyes upon him, and in which his good or bad fortune, as it is called, depended solely on the favor of his monarch; a situation which must have obliged him to have frequent intercourse with the most profligate among the great; yet he held on his course, notwithstanding all these difficulties; he feared God not by halves, but he "**followed the Lord fully**" as he was no time-server, but a decided Israelite; for all this may be inferred from the word "**greatly.**"

Let this picture of Obadiah be held up to the consideration of those who are so ready to object that their situation and circumstances prevent them from faithfully serving God. This wretched excuse has no other origin than the blindness and deceitfulness of the human heart. Under any circumstances, however favorable, true piety is not indebted to these, but to the grace of God alone; and those who seek and partake of this, serve God in all situations.

For what should hinder them? Did our objectors complain that they cannot serve God because of the corruption of their own hearts, this were a complaint that we might listen to, but thus to complain of *outward circumstances* is a fearful sign of spiritual death. True Divine life in the soul has a fire in it that burns up this stubble of circumstances. There is a necessity in the case; a necessity which is not to be restrained or checked, much less overpowered, by worldly circumstances.

One signal instance of Obadiah's substantial piety is here recorded.

Jezebel had endeavored to extirpate from the land every prophet of the Lord, and had already caused many of them to be slain. On this perilous occasion Obadiah was not inactive, but his activity was employed in the rescue of as many men of the Lord's prophets as possible, and he saved a hundred of them from the iron grip of Jezebel. He "**hid them by fifties in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.**" The hazard or expense of his undertaking proved no obstacle with him; his love of the brethren constrained him. And does not our blessed Saviour say, "**By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.**" Go, then, brethren, and do likewise, whenever it is necessary. The prince of this world, who was a murderer from the beginning, is still awake, and is exciting, in various places, rancorous opposition to the truth of the Gospel.

Spiritual wickedness is in many high places, as well as in many humble dwellings. Many a preacher may, ere long, be forced to resign his pulpit; many a professor his chair; many a mechanic his employment, and many a servant his situation, because he is a true believer in Christ, and a sincere follower of his example. Therefore forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, ye children of God, for mutual edification and succor. Remember Obadiah. If God continues to spare us, whatever blessings of his goodness we enjoy, let them be shared by any of our distressed brethren, for they are fellowheirs with us of our Redeemer's kingdom.

We return to the narrative. "**And Ahab called Obadiah**" and commissioned him upon a business to be executed in concert with himself. How extraordinary, that a man like Obadiah should be in such favor with a wicked man, and with an Ahab, for it could not have been unknown to himself, or to his court, that Obadiah "**feared the Lord greatly.**" And this scripture testimony to him is utterly irreconcilable with the supposition that he could dissemble either with the tyrant himself, or with anyone else. We can therefore only account for this by supposing that his integrity, activity, and firmness were things divinely overruled to restrain the most arrogant and rancorous foes and scoffers within the bounds of a certain respect and reverence. Ahab probably had discernment enough to perceive that, among all his courtiers, he had not another such a man as Obadiah; and those courtiers, too, might have been conscious that there was no one of themselves in whom such confidence could be placed as in this Israelite of the ancient school; and though the king might laugh at his religion, he felt that he could not do without him. And is there not something in every true Christian that extorts at least a tacit acknowledgment, from the bitterest enemies; a "**light**" to which, though it "**doth make manifest**" their darkness, they are unable to refuse a portion of their esteem and admiration? Yea, it has often happened that eminently pious men have been singularly honored for their conduct by these who could not understand its principles, and whose own lives were often directly contrary to them.

“Go into the country,” said Ahab to Obadiah, **“unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks; peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.”**

Lo, the only effect of this long continued chastisement of the Almighty was an anxiety for the preservation of his stud! To such obduracy can the hearts of the children of men be brought. Neither afflictions, nor miracles, nor admonitions, nor temporal mercies, are sufficient of themselves to restore the spiritually dead to life. How often are we apt to think concerning persons under some peculiar visitation, that surely now they will be changed and softened, and brought to reflection! We make inquiries, we take pains to ascertain the result; and lo! where we hoped at length to find some serious thought about God and eternity, only cares similar to those of Ahab engage their minds; and instead of the holy emotions, for which we sought— instead of sighs, prayers, and serious thoughts of eternity, we see only a multitude of low desires and cares, bearing them down the stream of life into the boundless invisible ocean. **“Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him”** (Proverbs 27:22). May Almighty grace have compassion upon us!

Obadiah readily enters upon the business to which his sovereign had commissioned him, and which he could do most conscientiously. Yet—again the question recurs to our minds—how could Obadiah bear to continue in the service of such a ruler, and among the vile and wicked men of which the court was composed? He must have mourned many an hour in secret over the wicked, and must often sighed in solitude, **“Woe is me, that I constrained to sojourn in Mesech, and to dwell in the tents of Kedar.”**

“In the world ye shall have tribulation” and Obadiah doubtless experienced this tribulation of God’s children, resident as he was among those who were strangers to true the God of Israel. But Obadiah could not adopt the convenient maxim, which enjoins flight from our calling, when abiding in it is disagreeable.

“My God,” he would consider, “has placed me here for reasons best known to himself; and it is an easy thing for him to preserve me, though my soul be among lions.” Here, therefore, he remained for the Lord’s sake. And what can be done better by you, who may find yourselves in a similar situation? However much evil you are obliged to be eyewitnesses of, whatever disagreeableness you may experience, and however you may be ridiculed or oppressed, let such be no reasons for removing of your own accord from the post which God’s providence has assigned you.

Endure for the Lord’s sake, until he himself, by his providence deliver you. If you are thrust out, or if circumstances and connections necessarily produce change in your situation, then remove with an easy conscience, for the Lord has called you.

But, until then, endure, and flourish as a lily among the thorns; be as the salt of the earth to a corrupt mass, and be as a lighthouse to benighted mariners; for, through Divine grace, you may thus serve to direct many passengers, through the hidden rocks and quicksands of this troublesome world, to the haven of rest.

And how much soever, the raging waves of the sea may foam around you, **“He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep, and the angel of the Lord is about them that fear him. His faithfulness and truth is their shield and buckler. Blessed are those who put their trust under the shadow of his wings!”**

III. Ahab and Obadiah had now “divided the land between them to pass throughout it”

And **“Ahab went one way by himself,”** while **“Obadiah went another way by himself.”** It was of the Lord’s peculiar providence that the king thus went in person, as he was thus made to witness something of the extent of misery and horror which the country at that time presented, if peradventure it might lead his unfeeling heart to feel some salutary emotions. But we know that it quite failed of producing this effect, and instead of returning as a subdued and humbled sinner, we find him only as a wild bull in a net, an infuriated being, whose rage is turned against him that smiteth him, a man lighting against God.

But let us turn our attention to his servant Obadiah. Behold him on the solitary and deserted road, bearing the woes of Israel on his compassionate heart; meeting everywhere with desolations and miseries, which he cannot remedy! The country around him, wherever he advanced, once a fruitful field, now changed to a parched desert; and its whole appearance seemed to say, **“Who can stand before thee when thou art angry?”** But that which must have affected him most, and pierced his heart the most deeply, must have been the thought of apostate Israel, who could yet, as with a forehead of brass, stand insensible to the lightning of the Lord’s power, and the thunder of his judgments; for he sees them continuing to live as before, in the most unpardonable obduracy, and in the most absurd security. How must it have afflicted him! How could he possibly refrain from holy indignation! God’s children are in this respect, as well as others, conformed to the image of their Saviour. They bear in a sense the sins of the world upon their hearts, and like him they have to become repairers of the breach which the ungodly have made; restorers of paths to dwell in, which others have destroyed. But happy are such persons; they are numbered among those to whom the man clothed in linen, with an inkhorn at his side, was directed, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, to **“go through the city of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst thereof.”**

While Obadiah is thus on his way, absorbed in melancholy reflections, he is met by a solitary and venerable personage, girded as a traveler and covered with a mantle, whom he immediately recognizes as Elijah, and prostrates himself in profound respect before him. **“Art thou that my lord Elijah?”** he asks. Is it possible? Nothing having for a long time been seen or heard of him, he, with many others, might have supposed that the Lord had secretly taken him to his rest. The prophet replies briefly in his own manner, **“I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.”** This reply, however, was too brief for the worthy Obadiah; and, indeed, was like an arrow to his heart. He felt that he was now but a poor, weak, desponding child of man. And all the children of God must have their trying seasons of personal danger for the trial and increase of their faith. What **“treasure”** we have, **“is in earthen vessels,”** (easily broken,) **“that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”**

This lesson Obadiah had now more perfectly to learn by the instrumentality of Elijah. And it evidently cost him considerable conflict with himself. **“What have I sinned,”** says he, **“that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation nor kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here! And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me.”**

These many words are not the language of tranquil faith, but of human fear and despondency. His imagination pictures to him dreadful forebodings; that, while he is gone to carry to Ahab Elijah’s message, the latter might be caught away by the Spirit of the Lord to some unknown region, as had happened, perhaps, heretofore to other saints of God. In the Acts of the Apostles we have such an event related concerning Philip the evangelist. Hence Obadiah apprehended Ahab’s sorest displeasure at his disappointment in losing the prophet Elijah. Ahab would consider himself mocked by Obadiah; or, at least, would be amazed that Obadiah had not secured the detention of the prophet; thus Obadiah would lose both his office and his life. Such were his fearful apprehensions. Natural however as they were, still they were only thoughts of flesh and blood. He looked, as Peter afterwards did, at the wind and the waves, but had lost sight of his Lord.

But, further. He begins to speak of his piety. **“I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord’s prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here; and he shall slay me.”**

“I am a pious man,” means to say, “thou must not be misled by my court dress and the office I fill; I am none of the rebellious children; I have continued faithful to the Lord. Canst thou find in thy heart to expose a believing brother to the most dreadful danger?”

And truly Obadiah was a pious man, notwithstanding all his weakness. Who could be offended with him for speaking of his piety, and recounting his good deeds on such an occasion? For it was neither presumption nor vainglory that led him to do so, but simply fear and dread. Here, however, let us be reminded that our salvation is built not upon works of righteousness that we have done, but upon God’s mercy; not upon what we are to him but upon what he is to us. All our works of righteousness together, are but a poor foundation to rest upon.

It was salutary, then, for Obadiah, and it is salutary also for us to be thus taught by providential experience our own weakness, that we may habitually learn to build more exclusively on that only sure foundation, Jesus Christ, the foundation which alone can stand for ever. Our only refuge and consolation, in life and in death, are the blood and righteousness of the Lamb of God; and, that we may depend upon him and abide in him alone, our gracious God suffers us continually to feel, in one way or another, our sin and weakness, that our own utter inability may never be lost sight of.

Are we ready to value ourselves upon our courage? His providence unexpectedly suspends over us some danger or threatening storm, and we experience that we are but as a reed shaken with the wind. Do we feel complacency in the strength of our faith? A test of it is presently given us, and we are made conscious that we only dreamt of possessing its genuine power.

Are we rich, as we think, in pious feelings? Soon, very soon, alas! by some apparently trifling accident, do we find our whole stock of goodness exhausted; and we are obliged to confess that out of Christ's fullness alone do we receive. If we imagine that death is no terror to us, and that we shall be able to show the world how men ought to die, a slight glimpse of the king of terrors will easily dissolve our heroic courage.

Are we become spiritually proud, thinking of the high advances we have made in holiness, we are soon made to learn the truth of the case. All our boasting now is at an end, and nothing remains for us but to cry, like every other child of God, "**God be merciful to me a sinner!**"

"**If I wash myself with snow water,**" saith Job, "**and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.**" And why, that we may decrease and Christ increase?

The discipline, indeed, is painful to our fallen nature, but the consequences are most salutary.

"**The end of the Lord**" was now attained in this instance of Obadiah. Self-humiliation had been effected in him, and the light was again suffered to shine upon him. Elijah said, "**As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto Ahab to-day.**"

This composed the fears of his troubled heart; so Obadiah went to Ahab, and he had now sufficient boldness to tell the tyrant, "**Behold, Elijah is here.**"

~ end of chapter 5 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
