

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

II. The Divided Kingdom, 1 Kings 12:1-22:53

M. Obadiah: Fulfilling God's Assignment Amid Great Opposition

(1 Kings 18:1-17a)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In our era, we face great conflicts in fulfilling God's assignments for us, a fact we can illustrate as follows:

Last Sunday, a member asked me about "unconditional" forgiveness, a topic about which other members have asked me in recent weeks and that I had addressed in the pulpit! Being asked this question yet again led me to do research on the topic to see why it so strongly affects so many believers, and I found that "unconditional forgiveness," otherwise called "therapeutic forgiveness," is "a major element of the psychology movement," and that "(a) major force behind the spread of therapeutic forgiveness is the Templeton Foundation" begun by "John Templeton . . . an evolutionist, pantheist and universalist." (https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/unconditional_forgiveness.html [David Cloud, "Unconditional Forgiveness," May 24, 2011 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service)]) "Since the 1990s, the Templeton Foundation has funded 'scientific studies' on the power of forgiveness, and . . . Christian counselors have been quick to jump on the unconditional forgiveness bandwagon," Ibid.

The fact that several members have persisted in asking me about the subject has left me wondering if I face opposition on the issue from some group somewhere! I thus told myself that since I had already preached on it, I should just "let it go and let God handle it." Yet, God felt otherwise: by a series of jarring events last week, besides the preparation of this sermon and the message I am due to give tonight, God led me to deal with it in this sermon!

Need: *Accordingly, we ask, "How can we fulfill God's assignments if we face great opposition to doing so?!"*

- I. When God had Elijah go to meet Ahab and end the severe drought, Elijah encountered Ahab's palace governor, Obadiah, and he faced life-threatening opposition in fulfilling God's calling, 1 Kings 18:1-14:**
 - A. After three years of drought, the Lord sent Elijah to show himself to Ahab and end the drought, 1 Kings 18:1.
 - B. The drought had been so bad that Ahab had divided up the land with his palace governor, Obadiah, to search the land for water sources that would grow grass so Ahab could feed his horses and mules, v. 2-3a, 5-6.
 - C. As Elijah then went on his way to present himself to Ahab, he encountered Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:7.
 - D. When the two men met, Elijah ordered Obadiah to go and tell Ahab he would meet him there, 1 Kings 18:8.
 - E. This order by God's prophet would have been God's calling for Obadiah, but it risked his life, v. 9-12b:
 1. Replying to Elijah's order that he report to Ahab that Elijah was there, Obadiah asked what sin had he done that would cause Elijah to order Obadiah do what might cause Ahab to want to kill him, 1 Kings 18:9.
 2. Obadiah then explained the threat to his life he faced in heeding Elijah's command, 1 Kings 18:10-12b:
 - a. Due to the severe, prolonged effects of the drought announced by Elijah back in 1 Kings 17:1, Ahab had sought for Elijah not only in Israel, but in other nations, and when the rulers of those lands had claimed that Elijah was not in their nations, Ahab had them verify their claim by taking an oath, 1 Kings 18:10.
 - b. Thus, when Elijah told Obadiah to go tell Ahab that he was waiting there to meet him, Obadiah feared that were God's Spirit to carry Elijah off to some other unknown location, when Ahab arrived at that place to meet Elijah and he was not there, Ahab would become furious and kill Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:11-12b!
 - F. However, Obadiah did not deserve death, and he clarified this fact by telling of his godly life, v. 12c-14, 3b-4:
 1. Obadiah reported that when Ahab's wife Jezebel had sought to kill all the prophets of God, he at great risk to his life had hid a hundred of those men by fifties in a cave, feeding them bread and water possibly from Ahab's own palace resources, no small feat in a drought-caused famine, 1 Kings 18:3b-4, 12b-13 ESV.
 2. Also, since Obadiah was Ahab's palace governor, he had interacted with Ahab's family, including his evil wife Jezebel whose effort to kill God's prophets Obadiah had countered. Thus, Obadiah had lived under great duress in ongoing, intense, secret conflict with Jezebel while treating her cordially to her face!
 3. Besides, Obadiah had revered God since childhood with a life-long track record of godliness, v. 12c.
 - G. So, for Obadiah to obey Elijah in going and telling Ahab that Elijah was waiting there to meet him, and were Elijah not to be there when Ahab arrived, Ahab would surely kill Obadiah when he did not deserve it, v. 14.
- II. Elijah addressed Obadiah's fear by taking an oath in contrast to the oaths of the kings of the nations around Israel, asserting that he would surely show himself to Ahab that day, 1 Kings 18:15, 10.**
- III. The title for God in Elijah's oath was "Lord of hosts," a title full of encouraging meaning for Obadiah:**

- A. The term "hosts" translates the plural noun, "*seba'ot*," meaning "armies, hosts." (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 838-839; H. A. W., Theol. Wrkbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. II, p. 750-751)
 - B. The title "Lord of hosts" was first used in Scripture 1 Samuel 1:3 when God was about to turn the nation Israel into a monarchy that would interact *often* in *conflict* with other *nations* (Ibid., H. A. W.), a title needed "to point out that Jahweh indeed was the king of those nations and that He would judge them," Ibid.
 - C. This "Lord of hosts" title also then was applied to God's handling of *personal* conflicts: (1) Hannah prayed to the "Lord of hosts" for a son to overcome the abuse she faced from her husband's other wife (1 Samuel 1:1-11) and (2) David countered Goliath's taunt by saying Goliath defied "the Lord of hosts," 1 Samuel 17:43-45.
 - D. Indeed, Elijah's statement, "**As the Lord of hosts before whom I stand**" in 1 Kings 18:15 is repeated word-for-word elsewhere **only** in 2 Kings 3:14 where Elisha encountered Ahab's wicked son Jehoram to show that Elisha "stood before" or "served" the "Lord of hosts," *who was sovereign over evil Jehoram!* (Ibid., B. D. B.)
 - E. Thus, Elijah asserted to Obadiah that he served the "Lord of hosts" *who was sovereign over Obadiah's dreaded, evil king Ahab as well as Elijah, and that Elijah would SURELY show himself to Ahab that day!*
- IV. Armed with Elijah's oath in the Name of the "Lord of hosts" title and thus believing God was sovereign over Ahab and Elijah, Obadiah OBEYED Elijah's call IN FAITH: he went to meet Ahab and told him that Elijah was there, and Ahab came and met Elijah just like Elijah had predicted, 1 Kings 18:16-17a.**

Lesson: *Though Obadiah had faithfully revered God and risked his life under duress to protect God's prophets, when given God's life-threatening calling to go tell Ahab where Elijah was, he hesitated until Elijah asserted that God was sovereign over Ahab and himself. Thus, in faith in a sovereign God, Obadiah fulfilled his divine calling.*

Application: *(1) May we obey God to trust in Christ for the salvation of our soul, Acts 17:30; John 3:16. (2) Then, if facing threatening opposition toward fulfilling God's assignment, may we recall that God is "Lord of hosts," sovereign over ALL we face, (3) that we then fulfill His assignment as an act of faith in Him!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

As noted in our introduction, God has led me to apply this message to the "unconditional" forgiveness issue regardless if I face opposition on it! Accordingly, in faith in the "Lord of hosts" Who is sovereign over all, I report that the party who last Sunday asked me about the issue mentioned two major arguments in favor of the "unconditional" forgiveness belief -- that (a) Scripture calls us to forgive others as the basis of God's forgiving us as believers (Matthew 6:14-15) and (b) **not** forgiving unconditionally leaves the wronged party harboring malice toward the wrongdoer. We answer these arguments and more (as follows):

(1) In Luke 17:3 KJV, Jesus said: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." That is **conditional** forgiveness! If we must forgive others for God to forgive us like Matthew 6:14-15 says, **since God sends most men to hell unforgiven** (Matthew 7:13-14), **we like God must forgive only those who repent!**

(2) On the matter of harboring malice toward a wrongdoer, if we harbor malice for any reason, we live by our sin nature, not by the Holy Spirit's power, Galatians 5:16-23. To claim we must unconditionally forgive another who has not repented or we will harbor malice is to admit we live by our sin nature, a state that is itself sin in violation of Galatians 5:16! We must thus rely on the Holy Spirit to obey Luke 17:3 and forgive **conditionally!** Whether this means we can forgive or not forgive another, we must rely on the Holy Spirit so as not to harbor malice against him!

(3) Also, (a) in former messages we noted that "early and diverse" manuscripts show Jesus likely never spoke the Luke 23:34 words of unconditionally forgiving others from the cross (Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Grk. N. T. (United Bible Societies), 1971, p. 180) and (b) the Church's first martyr, Stephen, did **not** ask God **unconditionally** to forgive his killers, but that He **not hold** the sin of killing him **against** them (**lest God not be free to forgive them if they did not repent**), Acts 7:60. In answer to Stephen's prayer, Paul who approved of Stephen's death (Acts 7:60-8:1) later received mercy from God since he had sinned ignorantly in unbelief, 1 Timothy 1:12-13.

(4) Finally, "unconditional" forgiveness opens the door for Liberal Theology's belief of universalism, the idea that God unconditionally forgives all men so that no one goes to hell. Some evangelicals lean toward that, too: Robert Brow's February 19, 1990 article, "The Evangelical Megashift" in Christianity Today, p. 13 held, "God's wrath, newly defined, 'never means sending people to an eternal hell.'" (cited in R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Evangelical: What's in a Name?" in John H. Armstrong, gen. ed., The Coming Evangelical Crisis, 1996, p. 34) Liberal Theology has its foot in evangelicalism's door, and "unconditional" forgiveness is not only unbiblical, but it even opens the door for apostasy in evangelicalism! We must hold to the biblical view of conditional forgiveness in support of the rest of God's truth.

May we trust in Christ to be saved. If facing conflict, may we rely on the "Lord of hosts" to do His will!