

Good morning, I, Grantley have the joy of sharing with you today.

In 1 Kings 16:33 we read "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him". He married Jezebel—a Sidonian princess—and actively led the nation away from Yahweh by building temples and altars to the pagan god Baal. Jezebel aggressively sought to eradicate the worship of the God of Israel. She ordered the execution of many of the Lord's prophets and actively supported 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah.

1 Kings 18 After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."

² So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria, ³ and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his palace administrator. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the LORD). A few verses further Obadiah says to Elijah "Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the LORD's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water."

In these few verses we see that Obadiah was the palace administrator and that he was such a devout believer in God that he put his own life at risk by hiding these prophets. Here we see in one of the darkest periods of Israel's history in the palace, which was one of the darkest places in Israel, God had his man there. God is never caught by surprise, God never needs to kill fires, God is totally in control with His chosen man right there amid what seems like total mayhem.

As we look at Iran, a country ruled by fanatical Ayatollahs who are supporting and funding Hamas and Hezbollah, determined to see the destruction of Israel and even their Arab neighbours, we see God at work. Despite incredible persecution, the church has silently grown from a few hundred in 1979 to between one and five million believers today, all from Muslim background, all worshipping Jesus at phenomenal risk to themselves and their

family members. In the middle of this chaos, God is actively building His church and not even the gates of hell can stop God.

As I will be in Angola possibly without internet when you listen to this message, I have prepared this message in advance and a few days before the June 30th march and march protests. I do not know what to expect on the 30th as I write this, however, what I do know is that God is in control, God has not been caught by surprise and God has His faithful servants in this country being salt and light making a difference. As I suspect this protest action will not end on the 30th, we need to hold onto the truth that God is in control, and we therefore need not fear anything.

Furthermore, we read in 1 Kings 19, God says to Elijah "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him." It is also in this very dark period that we see Elijah, one of the most powerful prophets ever. God is totally in control here; He has His servants silently building His kingdom even amid total paganism and debauchery.

In my first year at University of Pretoria, I came to accept Jesus as my Lord and saviour. Early in my second year in Engineering, I wanted to be a witness to my hundred odd classmates as I was the only one serving Jesus. I wanted to put something different on my rucksack, so I wrote in big letters "Jesus is my brother". Within one week, 8 others came to me and quietly asked me if I was also a Christian. Just like the 7000 who had not bowed down to Baal, we were nine in our class all quietly living for Jesus. However, once we realised, we were not alone, we became more bold to stand for our beliefs. I will never forget in our final year, we went to Armscor on an outing. After seeing all the technology they were developing, we went for a drink. There was enough

liquor to sink a ship, but only six cooldrinks. I confidently went to the Armscor spokesman, politely asked for more cooldrink stating there were nine of us who as Christians would not be drinking liquor that day. Are you the only one in your work environment, your social club or your lift club serving Jesus? Pin your flag to the wall, let people know you serve Jesus; you might be the Obadiah in the palace where you find yourself, you might even find coworking brothers and sisters, and you will strengthen the feeble at heart Christians around you.

In the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a tall statue made from different metals. As Daniel is interpreting the dream he says "While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." And a few verses later "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."

The statues around us can look formidable and even threatening, but it is the rock that will endure, it is the rock that will become a mountain that covers the whole earth. Jesus said that He will build his church and that not even the gates of hell can stop His church from covering the whole earth. So, whether we feel like we are an Obadiah stuck in an ungodly palace or being swamped by Xenophobia or in the shadow of a massive imposing statue; our God is greater and He will never abandon us if we look for shelter under His wings.

Let us pray:

Father, thank you that we can trust that nothing is too big for you, thank you that you liken us to children and that you are there to protect us, help me to put my trust in your unfailing love and help me not to allow the giant statue to intimidate me, help me to look to You, my rock and my salvation. Amen

Have a blessed day.