

Edom's Sins
Obadiah 1-14
ABC 11/10/19

The story is told of 2 ducks & a frog who lived happily together in a farm pond. The best of friends, the 3 would amuse themselves & play together in their waterhole. When the hot summer days came, however, the pond began to dry up, & soon it was evident they would have to move. This was no problem for the ducks, who could easily fly to another pond. But the frog was stuck. So it was decided that they would put a stick in the bill of each duck that the frog could hang onto with his mouth as they flew to another pond. The plan worked well--so well, in fact, that as they were flying along a farmer looked up in admiration & mused, *Well, isn't that a clever idea! I wonder who thought of it?* The frog said, *I did...*

Pride came before the literal fall for that frog. The Bible speaks against pride from beginning to end. We know what pride is, right? We all struggle with it. So did the people of Edom. We read of their judgment in Obadiah. Being a short book, its message is often overlooked in the shadow of the big boys of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Daniel. It's a book that's never quoted in the NT & often forgotten by Christians. Last week we looked at the background of the book & how Esau & Jacob became the nations of Edom & Israel & we traced the antagonism that existed between them from within the womb & for centuries that followed. The 1st 9 vss focus on Edom's pride. According to Obadiah, the pride of Edom deceived them into trusting in things other than God. The accusation is the people of Edom had sinned in their pride. How do we know this was true? We can't see the heart. But the proof of Edom's pride in the way they treated Israel which we find in vss 10-14. Pride leads to an unjustified sense of personal superiority, & when we feel this way about ourselves, we look down on others & mistreat them. Edom's mistreatment of the people of Jerusalem was proof of her pride & the reason for God's judgment.¹ **1-14** PRAY

John Wesley is said to have remarked that he read the newspaper *to see how God was governing His world*,² & this is biblical. God rules over kingdoms & nations. We read in Daniel, **All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven & among the inhabitants of earth; & no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'** (cf 2 Chron 20:6; Dan 5:21). This doesn't mean God is to blame for the foolish or wicked decisions & deeds of people or governments, but it does mean He's on His throne &

¹ Boice, J. M., *The Minor Prophets*, pp 244–245

² Quoted by Warren Wiersbe, *Be Concerned*, p 93

working out His perfect will. Knowing God reigns over all things ought to encourage us as we watch world events & grieve over the evil of people & nations. The sovereignty of God isn't an excuse for us to be indifferent to evil in the world, nor is it an encouragement to do nothing. God's ways are hidden & mysterious, & we sometimes wonder why He permits certain things to happen, but we must still pray, **Your will be done** (Mt 6:10) & be available to obey Him always.

1. The Charge (1-9) 1-2

Thus says the Lord God is a common phrase in the prophets. It's a claim that their message didn't originate in the prophet's own imagination, but in the mind of God (2 Pt 1:20-21). God is addressed here as *Adonai Yahweh*. *Adonai* meaning master or owner & in this context announces God's sovereign ownership of the world & history. *Yahweh* speaks of His eternal existence & presence & His covenant relationship with Israel.³ Obadiah receives a news bulletin from the Lord. God is bringing nations against Edom to judge them. In vs 3 we're told that Edom's pride is the main vice that has led them astray. **3A**

Pride is very deceptive. It makes us think things about ourselves & others that simply aren't true. The Edomites weren't the last people to be deceived by their pride. The Hebrew word for **arrogance** comes from a verb meaning to boil up. It pictures pride as water that boils up under pressure. Similarly, the proud person is like a bubble that thrusts itself up but is hollow inside. Interestingly, the same Hebrew word occurs 3x in the account of Esau, the father of the Edomites, when he squandered his birthright (Gen 25:27-34). What is pride? It's been defined as the attitude of a life that declares its ability to live without God.⁴ It's possible for Christians to fall into the sin of pride. One only has to dismiss God from his thinking to slip into the habit of neglecting his Bible, failing to be alone with God in prayer, & fall into the sin of making decisions & living life without giving God & His will a single thought.⁵ That is pride. Edom was proud of many things.

A. Their Security 3-4

³ Irvin A. Busenitz, *Joel & Obadiah*, p 244

⁴ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, 3:729

⁵ Frank Gaebelien, p 52

Edom boasted in their natural defenses. Since the land of Edom was hilly the majority of their cities were built high up on the rocks, where eagles nest. Any soldiers coming through the area were sitting ducks. The only way to approach them was through narrow canyons easily defended. Their chief city was Sela (meaning *rock*) & could be what is known today as Petra (meaning *rock*). It was nestled in the rocks & the only way to get into it was by a winding canyon about a mile long & never very wide. Because of this configuration it was possible for just a dozen or so men to hold off an entire army. It was one of the most secure places in the world. Edom took pride in their security. They said, **Who will bring me down to earth?** Sounds like Lucifer in Isaiah 14, doesn't it? God answers Edom in vs 4, **I will bring you down.** The Edomites might have been humanly secure, but they weren't divinely secure. God would burst their bubble.

B. Their Wealth 5

The people of Edom were also proud of their wealth. Edom had some fertile ground but was the center of a copper industry. The major trade routes of the world went through Edom. Anyone who wanted to trade in Egypt had to travel through Edom. Edom was able to control & tax all the commerce that came through. We say that the key to a good business today is *location, location, location*. Edom had a great location. **6**

The message is when God sends robbers & when He sends grape gatherers against Edom, they're going to take everything. Nothing is going to be left. Obadiah says the judgment coming upon Edom will be far worse than what happens when robbers come & steal, because they don't take everything. The judgment coming against Edom will be far more complete.

C. Their Alliances 7

Edom was situated strategically so all the surrounding nations had to maintain good relations with the Edomites. These alliances made Edom feel secure. They thought this made them strong & they were proud because of that strength. There are 3 kinds of people described here. The 1st group is **all the men allied with you**, those who had made covenants or treaties with them, those who had agreed to defend them. The next group are **the men at peace with you**. Who is that? Your neighbors. Then it's those **who eat your bread**. Who are those people? Those are your

friends, those you break bread with. Vs 7 is intentional talking about those who were allies, neighbors, & friends. Guess what? All of them are going to turn on Edom. All of them. Edom wasn't only self-deceived, but her trusted allies would also **deceive** her. They would do what was despicable & break a covenant with a partner (Ps 55:20; Amos 1:9). Edom's allies, neighbors, & friends would prove to be the worst of enemies. They'd fail to assist her in her hour of need. This disloyalty would completely surprise & **ambush** the Edomites.

D. Their Wisdom 8

When Job had his trials, one of the friends that came to comfort him was Eliphaz the Temanite. Teman was one of the major cities of Edom & was known for its wisdom. The phrase **men of the East** in the OT often refers to men from Edom. Passages like 1 Kgs 4:30 declare the great wisdom of the **men of the East**. Jer 49:7 says of Edom, **Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman? Has good counsel been lost to the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?** Wisdom & understanding were another source of pride for the Edomites. What's the result of this? **9**

Without wisdom & understanding the **mighty men**, the warriors are without wise counsel & direction. Because of this they are dismayed & destroyed.

Edom was proud because they were well-defended, rich, smart, had powerful friends, & wisdom. How many people (& nations) do you know who are filled with pride for some of the same reasons? When a nation becomes too proud, it's brought down just like Edom was. So are individual people. In *Mere Christianity*, CS Lewis writes this about pride:

There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; & of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. I have heard people admit that they are bad-tempered, or that they cannot keep their heads about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards. I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse himself of this vice. & at the same time I have very seldom met anyone, who was not a Christian, who showed the slightest mercy to it in others. There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, & no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. & the more we have it in ourselves the more we dislike it in others.⁶

The problem is we are often blinded to the pride we have. This could have to do, in part, with the twofold use of the word **pride**. We talk about American pride, we encourage school pride, we tell people to take pride in their work, & encourage athletes to play with pride. In most of these

⁶ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p 94

cases we're simply encouraging people to strive for excellence. But pride in it's most simple sinful manifestation is the feeling that we don't need God, that we are self-sufficient. Arrogantly, we look down on others & measure everything & everyone by our own standards. Proud people don't need faith. It's the humble who know they need God. What did we learn in James? **God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble** (4:6). Obadiah has presented the charge. Edom is proud & God is going to oppose them.

2. The Evidence (10-14)

He now gives the evidence, the reason for judgment against Edom. Pride reveals itself in the way we act toward those around us. Vs 10 is the topic sentence for this section. **10**

The bad blood between Esau & Jacob was hard to erase & each act of misconduct on the part of Edom only made the next one easier & more intense. We've seen its beginnings in the rivalry between Esau & Jacob (Gen 25:19–34; 27:1–46; 33:1–17). We saw it on a national level at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt (Num 20:14–21). Now we see it in the progression from pride to the specific sins of indifference & violence. Big sins are always built on little sins. The sin of unbrotherliness has small beginnings, but it grows. A battle between 2 men will lead to a battle between 2 families. This can lead to a battle between 2 communities, & even 2 nations. Edom is guilty of **violence** against their **brother Jacob**. **Violence** includes both moral wrong & physical brutality. This violence was especially despicable since it was against Edom's **brother**. Consequently, great **shame** would cover Edom, & God would cut her off **forever** (9). In vss 11–14 we find an intensification of this offense from mild beginnings to awful ends. There are several pieces of evidence presented,

A. Stood Aloof 11

What did Edom do when **strangers** attacked Judah & **foreigners** entered the gates? Nothing. Edom didn't help when Israel was under attack (11). They didn't help Israel when that help was needed. Often doing nothing is as much a sin as doing something we shouldn't do. Edom was indifferent but God says they **were as one** of those who attacked Israel. We see this still today. We see the news of somebody being attacked & people just standing around watching or turning

the other way. Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? The priest & the Levite passed by the needy guy (Lk 10:30-37). That's what Edom did to Israel. They stood around & watched. If somebody's in trouble & you ignore them, you pass by & don't care, God says you're actively participating in it. This failure on the part of Edom stands 1st in the list of their sin's progression. It takes us back to the 1st form of unbrotherly conduct in the Bible. The world's 1st brothers, Cain & Abel, were at odds because of God's acceptance of Abel's offering & his displeasure at Cain's. Cain was angry with his brother & killed him. When God demanded, **Where is your brother Abel?** Cain tried to stand aloof & said, **Am I my brother's keeper?** (Gen 4:9). This is what Edom was doing. Jerusalem was threatened by enemies & the people of Edom said, *This is no business of ours. We're not their keepers. Whatever happens, happens; if they fall, it's what serves them right.* Maybe you think, *Weren't they right? We aren't our brothers' keepers, are we?* Yes, we are! We have a responsibility to others & a special responsibility to those within your immediate family & the family of God. God holds you accountable! Where you can help, you must help. Where you can encourage, you must encourage. Where you can defend, you must defend.

B. Gloated 12a, 13b

Nobody likes a sore loser, but a gloating winner is just as bad. There was a sense in which Edom felt Israel was getting what was coming to them. When Judah was getting attacked by their enemies, the Edomites said, *Oh good! They deserve that. I'm glad this is happening!* We all know Christians who act like that. They never help anyone & aren't opposed to finding out the wicked details of some other Christian's failings so they can gloat & puff themselves up. Don't be that person.

C. Rejoiced 12b

They not only remained aloof & gloated, they even celebrated the defeat of their brother, Israel. They talked about it with smiles & joyfulness. God, like a father, reserves the right to punish His own children, but don't let anybody else enter in or interfere. & this is exactly the situation here. God allows Babylon to defeat Israel. God was chastising His own children, but Edom was there cheering their defeat. God doesn't need a cheering section when He's disciplining His people.

The fact they were rejoicing in Israel's punishment is a reason God is using as His indictment against them. This progression is easy to understand, for when there's hostility between 2 brothers, nations, or churches, & one sees the other in misfortune, the natural thing is to be happy about it. Prov 24:17 tells us, **Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, & do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles.** Let alone your brother! That's why as Christians who have been transformed, we don't act that way.

D. Boasted 12c

Boast is literally, *don't make your mouth great*. In essence, don't have a big mouth, don't boast. Boasting, gloating grows from pride & is closely related to rejoicing over another's misfortune. We rejoice because we consider ourselves better. If we saw ourselves on the same level as others, we'd mourn with them & turn to God in humble thanksgiving that we've been spared, though our sins are also many. Up to this point, all steps in this repulsive growth of unbrotherliness have been attitudes or at least actions of a negative sort. The Edomites stood aloof in the day of Jerusalem's trouble. This led them to look down on their brothers, rejoice in their misfortune, & ultimately boast they were stronger, wiser, & superior to them. This sin can't be confined to attitudes, however. What we think inevitably results in actions & this is what we find next.

E. Entered & Looted 13

No longer aloof, they entered the city & looted Israel **in the day of their disaster**. Apparently, Babylon attacked Judah & left them in a defenseless position. The Edomites saw this, watched this, rejoiced & boasted in it, & then came & used the opportunity steal what they could. Think about when riots or natural disasters happen in our country. People take advantage & loot, right? That's the picture of Edom. Judah is getting attacked & they take advantage of that & steal from them.

F. Stand, Cut Down, Imprisoned 14

Do you see the progression? When the Jews were trying to escape, the Edomites prevented them. They had it in for them. They wanted them to suffer. They actually caught Jews who were

escaping, rounded them up, & delivered them back into the hands of their enemies. This is the ultimate growth of their sin. It sounds terrible, & it is. But this is something Christians are sometimes also guilty of, not in the literal sense, but in serving the cause of Satan through their treatment of Christians who've sinned in some way. Our duty to other believers is to build them up (Eph 5:12) & restore them if they've sinned (Gal 6:1).

Edom treated God's people terribly when distress & calamity came upon them. For all this, God's judgment was coming upon them. 1st they did nothing. Then they gloated over Israel's misfortune & rejoiced in their distress & calamity. They even boasted about it. Then they took advantage of their vulnerable state & even joined in the violence against God's people. Are we guilty of the same when we see others in distress or calamity? If so, God sees it as sin & He will deal with it in our life. Obadiah has concluded his examination of Edom's sin. Step by step he's shown its development. With unavoidable logic he's demonstrated the causes of the perpetual hatred with which Ezekiel was later to charge the country (Ezek 35:5).⁷ There's nothing left for Obadiah to do but speak of that coming day of the Lord that will be judgment for Edom as well as deliverance for those the Edomites have mistreated. These are powerful words that remind us of our responsibility to each other. God expects us to get involved in helping those who are hurting. As individuals, it's tempting to shut our eyes to the needs around us. We can become so absorbed in ourselves we don't even see those who are around us. But when we do this, we're just like Edom. Hopefully you can see how this ancient prophet's words apply to us today. The person or nation who puts their confidence in themselves is foolish. One of the problems with self-reliance & pride is that one isn't open to correction. After all, if I'm right, why should I listen to what anyone else thinks? Pride is invasive in each of us. For example, if someone were to say to you, *What makes you think you're a Christian?* Would you immediately begin listing the good things you do, how involved you are at church, & the biblical knowledge you have? Or would you point to the cross of Christ & humbly confess that you're saved only & solely by God's grace that's extended to you through Jesus Christ? My guess is you see evidence of pride in your own

⁷ Frank Ely Gaebelein, *Four Minor Prophets*, p 31

life. I see it in me. The message of Obadiah reminds us of the words of Solomon, **Pride goes before destruction, & a haughty spirit before stumbling** (Prov 16:18). If we want to live faithfully we must remind ourselves daily that our **help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven & earth** (Ps 121:2). We are His people. We are dependent on His mercy & His grace. As we come to trust Him we'll be less focused on ourselves & more open to serve each other. We have a responsibility to care for those around us. It isn't an accident that when we're told about the humility of Christ in Phil 2 we're told He humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant. The humble person is the person who has a heart of compassion toward others. They understand they need mercy so they're more willing to extend mercy. If we're honest, we all have to admit we aren't as different from the Edomites as we'd like to believe. Let me ask some probing questions:

Have you ever seen a fellow human in need but willfully ignored what you could do to help? Have you witnessed someone who was the target of abuse & not only not defended them but actually joined in? Have you ever stood by & did nothing when you knew that wrong was being done? Have you stood by silently while the name of God was dragged through the dirt? Have you been swept up in the competition of the moment & found yourself becoming just as savage as those around you? Have you ever smirked (internally or externally, publicly or privately) when someone you disliked faced a difficult time? You felt they finally got what was coming to them? Instead of feeling sorrow you were glad. Maybe a friend who seemed to have everything ran into some hard times & instead of extending a hand you thought, *Now they know what life is like for the rest of us!* Maybe you felt a quiet satisfaction when another church (the competition) was experiencing conflict. Instead of praying for the unity of the church, you enjoyed telling others about the struggles of these people in the hope it would make your own church look better. When we do these kinds of things are we any different from Edom? The message of Obadiah isn't archaic & outdated. This message is just as powerful & pertinent today as it has ever been. It's a call for us to remember to Whom we belong. We're called to remember that our job isn't to climb

over others, our job is to work together. We aren't playing *King of the Mountain*. We know who the King of the mountain is. His name is Jesus.

As I mentioned last week, there's a critical time in the gospels when Israel & Edom meet again. This time Israel is represented by one Man & Edom by another. The Edomite is a man by the name of Herod. The Israelite was Jesus. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus shortly after His birth. Antipas had John the Baptist killed. But Jesus & the reports of His miracles fascinated Herod. In Lk 23 we read the account of Jesus before this King. Herod had everything he wanted. He had power, money, & the freedom to indulge himself in any way he wanted. He was a proud man. So proud that when the King of Kings, the Son of God, the Ruler of Universe stood before him the only thing that concerned Herod was, *What's in this for me?* Herod hoped Jesus would entertain him with a miracle. Instead of worshipping the Savior, Herod mocked, ridiculed, & became a party to Jesus' murder. Jesus could have fought back but didn't. He didn't claim the throne that was rightfully His because He wanted to make it possible for us to share His glory with Him. For that to happen, He had to go to the cross. He had to lay down His life on our behalf. Two kings representing 2 different ways of living. Each one of us has to choose which path we're going to follow. Will we follow the ways of Herod or the ways of Jesus? Will we trust our strength or the Lord's? Will we seek to exalt ourselves or exalt Him? Will we proclaim our goodness or His grace? Will we use others or will we reach out to them? Will we see others in terms of what they can do for us or will we look for what we can do for them? These are basic questions & they're raised by a prophet who wrote only 21 vss in the entire Bible. It's true that these question are raised by a man we know little about. But we'd be wise to listen, & to listen well. What are some personal applications we can make?⁸

1. Pride deceives & leads to more sin. We must humble ourselves.
2. Sin follows a downward path. We saw how Edom progressed in its sins against Judah. At 1st it was just complacency, but then it was the promotion of evil & finally participation in evil. It shows us how dangerous complacency is. It never stops there.

⁸ Adapted from Hampton Keithley IV, bible.org/seriespage/4-obadiah

3. God will keep His word. Obadiah said Edom's judgment would be complete & appropriate. They would get what they deserved. & they did. Edom no longer exists.

4. God will punish sin. We are introduced to the Day of the Lord (we'll talk more about it next week). God sees what nations are mistreating His people & He will judge them accordingly. It shows us that God is in control. This is important for us to believe when we face tough times.

5. God will protect His own. God is good & He loves us & will take care of us.

These last 2 ideas, that God is in control & that God is good are extremely important to living the Christian life. These principles are repeated throughout the Bible. One place we see it in the NT is Mt 6:19-34. In His SOTM, Jesus warns that we cannot serve 2 masters. The temptation for us is to try to find life in things, because we don't believe God can or will take care of us. So we buy new things or try new experiences to find meaning. Or we try to find identity & meaning through our job or friends or kids. We do all these things because we don't believe that God is in control & that He is good. But Jesus tells us that God is even in control of the birds & the flowers, so He certainly can take care of us. He also emphasizes that God is our Heavenly Father, which means He loves us & is good. So when we face difficulties, that doesn't mean God isn't there or that He doesn't love us. The difficulties are for our own development. We can get through them if we believe in God's sovereignty & goodness. Prophecy isn't just information for our heads so we can know what God has done & will do. Prophecy is good for our hearts because it helps us see that God is in control & God is going to preserve His people.