

“MAJOR THEMES FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS: OBADIAH.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Sermon Texts: Obadiah

Introduction.

There are five one-chapter books in the Bible, a letter from Paul to Philemon, the second and third of John's three letters, Jude and Obadiah. Obadiah holds the record for being the shortest book in the OT.

Obadiah is the obscure prophet, we know nothing of this background, family, history or location. His name means servant of God, and he does it well, staying in the background.

Psalms 84:10 I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

None of the prophets had any claim on fame or a claim on God's favor. None of them were important or worthy of their calling. God called them first and then gave them His words to say. To praise a prophet is like praising the pipes that bring the water into our homes or praising the wires that bring the electricity. They are simply conduits, carriers, messengers.

They could no more claim credit for being a prophet than we can claim credit for being Christians. We didn't do anything. We are saved by grace. The service any of us gives is all grace, the goodness of God.

Obadiah also has the shortest introduction, just two words in Hebrew, "Vision Obadiah." The prophets were seers before they were sayers. They had a supernatural revelation from God before they dared say, "Thus says the Lord."

You may be small or unimportant or laboring in insignificance. You may be the least of the Minor Prophets, but if your message begins with "Thus says the Lord God" that is significance enough. If you have God's Word in your heart and on your lips, your service will be great.

Like Jonah which is focused entirely on the city of Nineveh, Obadiah is focused entirely on the country of Edom, the nation to the east of Judah across the Dead Sea.

Edom and Israel, Esau and Jacob.

Knowing the history of Edom is important to understanding this prophecy against Edom. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, hence the reference in 1:10, "your brother Jacob."

Isaac, the son of Abraham, married Rebekah and we read of the birth of the twins in:

Genesis 25:21-26 And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. [22] The children struggled together

within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. [23] And the LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”

[24] When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb.

[25] The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau.

[26] Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. (ESV)

The ancient prophecy of God said that two nations struggled together in her womb, the older and stronger would serve the younger.

Later in Genesis Esau's name was changed to Edom and Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Two nations struggling together in her womb. There was trouble from the beginning and it only got increasingly worse.

Jacob tricked Esau out of his birthright and took the blessing of the firstborn and then had to flee for his life and stayed away 20 years until things cooled down. But the bad blood continued.

400 years later when Israel was wandering in the wilderness after fleeing Egypt, Israel asked permission to travel through Edom.

Numbers 20:17-21 “Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. We will go along the King's Highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.” [18] But Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you.” [19] And the people of Israel said to him, “We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then I will pay for it. Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more.” [20] But he said, “You shall not pass through.” And Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force. [21] Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him. (ESV)

Later in the history of the kings Edom took sides against Judah in some battles. By Obadiah's time the rift was complete. There was no brotherly affection.

Obadiah 1:11 On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. (ESV)

Obadiah 1:14 Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives; do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress. (ESV)

Edom kicks Israel when she is down and this is the final straw. Through His prophet Obadiah God promises Edom would “be cut off forever” and

Obadiah 1:18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken. (ESV)

That prophecy would be finally fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans wiped out the last remaining remnant of the Edomites. They are no more.

In a short little book like this it's easy to follow the outline. There are three major sections and three major themes.

The three major themes of Obadiah.

The guilt of Edom. Edom's sin, 3-14

Obadiah first prophesies about Edom's sins. First, her sin of pride and then her sin of mistreating Jacob/Judah.

The sin of Pride, 3-9.

Edom was proud of her *strength*, of her security, of her defenses, 1:3-4.

[3] The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock,
in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart,
"Who will bring me down to the ground?"

[4] Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars,
from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD. (ESV)

If you have ever been to Jordan and visited the rose red city of Petra, a city carved out of sheer 5000 foot cliffs accessible only through narrow passageways with high walls, you will know that this city could defend itself against armies with just a few men. It was something to take pride in.

Edom was proud of her *diplomacy*, and their allies, of the way they had manipulated political arrangements to their advantage, 1:7.

Edom was proud of her *wisdom*, of her philosophy, 1:8. One of Job's wise counselors was an Edomite. They boasted in their superior knowledge.

Edom was proud of her *mighty men*, 1:9.

We all know the children's game "King of the Mountain." It's a game with a lot of boasting in one's strength and cleverness, and daring anyone else to challenge him. He doesn't usually last long before someone else is on top boasting.

We like seeing the proud champion brought down by a new one. Look at the rise and fall of people like Tiger Woods. I was glad to see the Oklahoma City Thunder have knocked off last year's NBA champs, the Dallas Mavericks.

Remember the news of the Titanic. It was called the ship that God couldn't sink. What hubris. I think people should tremble at the memory of what happened. I think a fear of God should settle on our hearts.

Like nations before and after, Edom boasted in her glory and strength. So she will soon be cast down.

So what about national pride? The pride that says America is a great nation and nothing can happen to her, she is too big and too rich and too great to fall?

Yes there is a health kind of pride or patriotism, taking pride in our accomplishments and contributions to the world and they are many.

But there is an arrogance that is very dangerous. A kind of self-sufficiency, a sense that we have done all this ourselves and we don't need God or don't need to acknowledge God and give the glory and honor and praise to Him.

The sin of mistreatment of God's people, 10-14.

God promised Abraham that those who curse Israel will be cursed.

Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (ESV)

Edom has abused his brother Jacob, Israel. This is a double violence.

Edom stood aloof when strangers and foreigners cast lots for Jerusalem. Edom stood idly by when trouble and distress came to Jacob's house, 1:11.

Lots were cast for Jerusalem and her wealth and when the children of Israel were fleeing from their enemies through Edom, the Edomites were handing the survivors over to their enemies.

Verses 12-14 give a ***seven-fold admonition*** to Edom and a clear accusation of Edom's guilt.

Do not gloat over their misfortune, do not rejoice in their ruin, do not boast in their distress, do not enter their gate, do not loot his wealth, do not stand at the crossroads and cut off or hand over those fleeing.

The judgment on Edom, 15-18.

The day of the Lord is near, nearer than any ever thinks. The basis of judgment will be lex talionis, what you have done will be repaid to you.

The judgment of God on Edom sounds like His judgment of Satan. Just as Satan tried to destroy all God's people, so Satan and all his followers will be destroyed. There will be no survivors, all will go down to judgment. All the seed of Satan will be crushed underfoot.

Pride goes before the fall and the greater the pride the greater the fall.

The Consequences of Edom's judgment, 19-21.

What will happen to God's people as a result of what happens to Edom?

Judgment on Edom, means deliverance/redemption for God's people. The enemies will be brought down and God's people will be raised up. Mount Esau will be ruled over by Mount Zion.

The names of the places represent all the regions all around Israel, all will belong to Israel.

There can only be one kingdom, the Kingdom of the Lord. There can only be one God, and all the rest are His servants.

Application and conclusion.

By way of application and conclusion let's take the first of the three major themes and apply it to our day and ourselves.

Regarding the sin of pride.

Why is pride such a bad sin? Why does it make the top of the list? Why does Scripture say "God opposes the proud" (Psalm 46:7) and that He abhors pride (Amos 8:6), that it's an abomination to Him? Why does God take such an effort to frustrate and humiliate the proud?

Pride is a form of unbelief. Pride dethrones God and replaces Him with us. Pride is a sin against God and against His sovereignty. This is why atheism is the ultimate form of pride, total confidence and reliance on self and total trust in one's own superior intellect.

The spirit of our age is all about me. We live in and breathe the air of a self-centered, selfish, self-serving culture. Everything is about us, our lives, our comfort, our success and accomplishments.

We are proud of our education, our knowledge, our ability, our connections, our heritage, our church, our yards, our farms, our doctrine, our giving, our reputations, our self-righteousness, that we are so much better than so many others. And if we could we would be proud of our humility.

Pride is also the source or force behind our insecurity. Always feeling like we don't measure up or we have to try harder to do better and be better. We always have a reputation we are trying to build.

"Was my sermon good enough? What did everyone say about it? Did they like it? Do they like me? What will happen if I don't measure up?"

Pride comes when we think we are something or deserve something. The only thing we deserve is death and eternal judgment. That's what we have earned and merited, that's what we have coming. Life gets a lot clearer and cleaner from this perspective.

We need to get over ourselves. We need to humble ourselves. An honest assessment of our sin should humble us. The only boasting should be who is the bigger sinner. Repentance kills pride.

If pride is so deeply engrained in us and if it's so contrary to God and to heaven, it occurs to me that the challenges we face at the end of life maybe specifically and uniquely designed to root out our pride before we get to heaven.

In our last days on earth we may bear the indignity of having to be dependent on others and running out of money and having to wear special underwear again and having to be a burden to others. Pride turns us away from God, humility turns us toward God.

As with Edom, so with us. The great competitors against God are our intelligence, the number of our friends and allies, our strength and power, our material resources. When God starts to take those away one by one, our pride falls away. God will share His glory with no others. He will not have us boasting in things that are gifts of His grace, as if they were our own doing.

Prophecy like this is always meant to change our lives, to change our hearts, to change our attitudes. Prophecy like this is meant to humble us, to stop our foolish and destructive ways, to make those who are proud and arrogant and who boast in their strength and in their wisdom to turn from this folly and humble themselves and pray and repent and turn to the Lord their God, and who knows, He may relent and deliver us and redeem us.

Prophecy is meant to change our lives, to deliver us from evil and the day of evil and turn the hearts of children to their Father.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, [24] but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (ESV)

1 Peter 5:6-11 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, [7] casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. [8] Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. [10] And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. [11] To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)