

Major Messages from the Minor Prophets
Your Pride Will Ultimately Put You in Your Place
The Book of Obadiah

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Introduction: The Prophets of the Old Testament are divided by scholars into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. More precisely, we call Isaiah, along with Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Major Prophets. The remaining books of the Old Testament are called Minor Prophets. The terms major and minor refer to the size of these books, not the degree of their importance.¹

There are 12 Minor Prophets. We are studying through the Minor Prophets. We will devote one Sunday (one message) to each of the 12 Minor Prophets. Our goal is to discover that central core message of the book.

Today, we are studying the Prophet Obadiah. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament—only 21 verses. There is something else that is unusual about Obadiah. Obadiah is a prophetic message not to Israel, but to one of Israel's enemies—the Edomites.

Who were the Edomite? The Edomites were descendants of Esau. So, Israel descended from Jacob; Edom from Jacob's brother, Esau. Edom and Israel should have been able to exist together, but as is so often the case, a centuries-old feud still exists. I believe that the primary purpose of this book in its original setting is to help Israel to know that they could trust God with their enemies.

How can we apply this book to our lives? I think there is a strong theme of pride that runs through this book. Pride kept Edom from coming to the aid of Israel. Pride keeps us from doing so many things that we know we ought to do. Let's consider that today.

You will note the source of pride, first, in verses 1-9.

The Source of Pride (1-9)

The vision of Obadiah.

This is what the Lord GOD has said about Edom:

We have heard a message from the LORD;
a messenger has been sent among the nations:
"Rise up, and let us go to war against her."

² Look, I will make you insignificant
among the nations;
you will be deeply despised.

³ Your presumptuous heart has deceived you,
you who live in clefts of the rock
in your home on the heights,
who say to yourself,

¹ Lamentations is considered with these books as a major prophet because it is written by Jeremiah.

“Who can bring me down to the ground?”

⁴Though you seem to soar like an eagle
and make your nest among the stars,
even from there I will bring you down.

This is the LORD’s declaration.

⁵If thieves came to you,
if marauders by night—
how ravaged you would be!—
wouldn’t they steal only what they wanted?

If grape pickers came to you,
wouldn’t they leave some grapes?

⁶How Esau will be pillaged,
his hidden treasures searched out!

⁷Everyone who has a treaty with you
will drive you to the border;
everyone at peace with you
will deceive and conquer you.

Those who eat your bread
will set a trap for you.

He will be unaware of it.

⁸In that day—
this is the LORD’s declaration—
will I not eliminate the wise ones of Edom
and those who understand
from the hill country of Esau?

⁹Teman, your warriors will be terrified
so that everyone from the hill country of Esau
will be destroyed by slaughter.

We don’t know exactly who this Obadiah was, but he had a strong word for Israel’s neighbors—Edom. They were guilty of pride. They had an opportunity to come to the aid of their neighbors—Israel, but pride kept them from helping. I think we will discover much about the source of our pride in Edom’s pride. Obadiah points out four things that were the source of their pride.

- Accomplishments—Verses 3 and 4 indicate that they had accomplished what they thought was perfect security from any enemy. Some of this was natural habitat, but some of it was the way they had nestled themselves into this natural protection.
- Assets—Their assets are the subject of verse 5-6. They had great assets that they trusted in. Obadiah points to the fact that if pillagers came, at least they would leave something. In an ironic twist, what they are going to experience is worse.
- Allies—Edom’s trust in allies is the subject of verse 7.
- Authority—Here wisdom speaks to their military strategy that they assumed gave them authority over all enemies.

The point of this section is that their trust is in anything and everything except God. Their trust is in their accomplishments, their assets, their allies, and their authority. That trust has deceived them. (Verse 3) The deception of their heart is going to be the very thing that leads them to their destruction. This is an old lesson so difficult to learn. The writer of Proverbs admonished, “Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18)

No wonder the writer lists pride as one of things that God hates! (Proverbs 6:17)

Perhaps one of the greatest stories about pride is the story of the Titanic. Perhaps because the ship was billed as “unsinkable,” the crew ignored icebergs in the area. You know that the “unsinkable” Titanic did sink, killing 1517 of the 2206 passengers and crew she was carrying that cold night in 1912.

What is the source of pride in your life? Anything that causes you to trust in self instead of God.

The Symptoms of Pride (10-14)

At some point, pride is going to manifest itself in our lives.

You will be covered with shame
and destroyed forever
because of violence done to your brother Jacob.

¹¹ On the day you stood aloof,
on the day strangers captured his wealth,
while foreigners entered his gate
and cast lots for Jerusalem,
you were just like one of them.

¹² Do not gloat over your brother
in the day of his calamity;
do not rejoice over the people of Judah
in the day of their destruction;
do not boastfully mock
in the day of distress.

¹³ Do not enter the gate of My people
in the day of their disaster.
Yes, you—do not gloat over their misery
in the day of their disaster
and do not appropriate their possessions
in the day of their disaster.

¹⁴ Do not stand at the crossroads
to cut off their fugitives,
and do not hand over their survivors
in the day of distress.

Here are the specific ways that pride manifested itself in Edom.

- Passive Watching of Injustices—Edom stood by and watched the violence being done to Israel. God accused them of participating in the injustice by their being idle.

- Active Rejoicing of Another's Difficulty—Not only did Edom not intervene, they rejoiced at the calamity of their enemy. Pride causes that kind of reaction.
- Convenient Seizing of Opportunity—Edom took advantage of the situation.

What evidence is there in your life that your needs and wants are more important than that of someone else?

The Solution to Pride (15-21)

For the Day of the LORD is near,
against all the nations.
As you have done, so it will be done to you;
what you deserve will return on your own head.

¹⁶ As you have drunk on My holy mountain,
so all the nations will drink continually.
They will drink and gulp down
and be as though they had never been.

¹⁷ But there will be a deliverance on Mount Zion,
and it will be holy;
the house of Jacob will dispossess
those who dispossessed them.

¹⁸ Then the house of Jacob will be a blazing fire,
and the house of Joseph, a burning flame,
but the house of Esau will be stubble;
Jacob will set them on fire and consume Edom.

Therefore no survivor will remain
of the house of Esau,
for the LORD has spoken.

¹⁹ People from the Negev will possess
the hill country of Esau;
those from the Judean foothills will possess
the land of the Philistines.

They will possess
the territories of Ephraim and Samaria,
while Benjamin will possess Gilead.

²⁰ The exiles of the Israelites who are in Halah
and who are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath
as well as the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
will possess the cities of the Negev.

²¹ Saviors will ascend Mount Zion
to rule over the hill country of Esau,
but the kingdom will be the LORD's.

Obadiah's name means "servant of God" or some say maybe just "worshipper of God." Here is the key. Make yourself a servant of God. The best way to deal with our pride is make ourselves servants of the most High God. Ultimately, He is the one who is in control. He is sovereign over the nations. He is sovereign over our lives.

So What?

I want to close with indicating three New Testament Scriptures.

1 Peter 5:6-- Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time,

1 Corinthians 10:11-12-- Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written as a warning to us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² So, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall.

2 Corinthians 1:9-- Indeed, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

Before the incomparable day of 9-11, one of America's greatest terrorist acts was carried out in 1995 by Timothy McVeigh who was convicted of the bombing of the Federal Courthouse in Oklahoma City. The bombing took the lives of 168 persons and injured over 600 more. At his execution, McVeigh offered no final words as he had the opportunity to do, but he had slipped a note to the warden. On the note was the words to a poem "Invictus"—Latin for "unconquerable."

I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.
(From "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley, 1849-1903)

Compare that to the words from William Carey, great missionary of another generation, that he asked to be engraved on his tombstone.

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness.
My Jesus and my all.