

Route Sixty-Six

*Part Thirty-One
Obadiah
A Protective Father
(John 5:39)*

With Study Questions

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Part Thirty-One

Obadiah

A Protective Father

(John 5:39)

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

Introduction

I was recently asked to do the memorial service of an old friend. He was a local fellow and fairly young, so the service was very well attended. It became apparent to me, as people stood up and shared their thoughts, that my old friend had been in some sort of twelve-step program. I was previously unaware. But when some of his friends stood and a huge portion of the congregation recited their prayers and poems by heart, I realized that the room was full of people in recovery.

Prayerfully, I considered how this might affect the message I was assigned to give. My friend's wife had strongly encouraged me to give the gospel, which I was more than happy to accommodate. So, I opened my devotion by saying something that I don't normally say in a memorial/gospel presentation. It was something along the lines of, "Clearly, there are many people in this room who understand what it means to come to the end of yourself."

Admitting powerlessness over an addiction is a non-negotiable for someone in that battle. But many people in recovery become very single-minded in their quest for sobriety. This is understandable if you are involved in a behavior that may rapidly ruin or end your life. At the same time, the steps generally conclude with an acknowledgment of a spiritual awakening¹ which puts the principles of this practice into "all our affairs."

My point in this memorial service was that there is an enemy which goes significantly deeper than specific addictions that we can't seem to get

¹ I have no desire here to be overly critical of programs designed to help people through intensely difficult issues. That being said, the notion of a "God, as we understood Him" or a higher power of our own devices can result in a sort of 'out of the pan, into the fire' spiritual scenario.

a handle on. Sin and death and everything that attends those inevitable realities (pain, sorrow, discontent, discouragement, despair, disease, disobedience, darkness, frustration et al) brings the entirety of humanity to the end of itself. It is the acknowledgment of our wholesale inability that brings the human heart to the beginning of the redemptive place, uttered by the Apostle Paul:

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 7:24, 25)!

Survey of Obadiah

I open with this as we bring our meditations to Obadiah because Obadiah single chapter revolves around the judgment of a single nation, Edom. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. In the Scriptures we do see brothers used to instruct us on the natural and intimate antagonism between spiritual forces. Cain slew Abel and Ishmael and Isaac were the ill-advised plan of Abraham and Sarah which has been the source of international conflict to this very day.

Esau is a supreme example of disappreciation for that which is spiritual and redemptive. Who has not scratched their head at the seemingly absurd exchange he made of his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup (Genesis 25:34)? It would seem that the only reasonable answer for such a swap would be utter disregard for the birthright. Like Uzzah and the ark, he lacked the requisite, thoughtful respect, culminating with a hasty and foolish choice that would affect his progeny for generations. Are we wise and thoughtful enough to gauge how our own decisions may manifest themselves in the years to come?

Unlike that progeny of Jacob, the Edomites would not make it through history. Obadiah 1:10 would prophesy that they would be “**cut off forever**” which has happened. Why did this happen? What was the undoing of the Edomites? It certainly wasn’t because they were a weak, vulnerable and disadvantaged people. In Obadiah 1:3 we read that they dwelt in the “**clefts of the rock.**” They lived in Mount Seir (Genesis 36:8, 9), which was viewed as virtually impregnable due to the rock dwellings and difficult access. It was also a place of fertile valleys and fruitful soil. It may have been wise of them to utter the proverbial prayer:

**Two *things* I request of You (Deprive me not before I die):⁸
Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither
poverty nor riches – Feed me with the food allotted to me;⁹
Lest I be full and deny *You*, And say, “Who *is* the Lord?” Or
lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God
(Proverbs 30:7-9).**

It does require special maturity and grace to navigate the waters of poverty and/or riches. The Edomites had the riches and it became their undoing. We see it more often in the young and strong, but the destructive attributes of Edom are found in young and old. And it often requires our heavenly Father’s paternal afflictions to cure us. Or, as in the case of Edom, if we spurn His Fatherly call, the afflictions are but a pure judgment. In a mere two verses we see a very thorough curriculum vitae of Edom’s cancerous personal properties:

**The pride of your heart has deceived you, *You* who dwell in
the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; *You* who say
in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’⁴
Though you ascend *as* high as the eagle, And though you set
your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down,”
says the Lord (Obadiah 1:3, 4).**

We are met with the blinding deception of pride; and undue confidence in their own strength—the supposed impenetrable fortress of their rock dwelling. Who could possibly bring them down??? Like the infamous quote regarding the Titanic that “even God could not sink it.”

The Edomites had engaged in their own structuring of the Tower of Babel, thinking they could ascend as “**high as the eagle**” and set their “**nest among the stars.**” But when God decides it is time for a ship to sink or a nation to come to an end, His hand is not too short to bring it to pass.

He removes kings and raises up kings (Daniel 2:21).

But why would God bring such destruction upon Edom. Surely, their wickedness made them ripe for judgment. But there was something

uniquely evil about Edom. It was their hatred and vindictive spirit toward God's covenant people.

For violence against your brother Jacob, Shame shall cover you, And you shall be cut off forever (Obadiah 1:10).

The Psalmist makes this clear:

Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, "Raze it, raze it, To its very foundation" (Psalm 137:7).

Ezekiel 25:12-14 gives a more detailed account of how Edom acted **"revengefully against the house of Judah"** and how, as a consequence, they would be made **"desolate."**

The point here is that God has made a promise to persevere His covenant people. This promise extends back to the Abrahamic Covenant:

I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:3).

God kept this promise through all of the Old Covenant with Israel and this promise is extended to the New Covenant in the blood of Christ. We see it in the words of Jesus to Peter:

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

Kings and kingdoms come and go. Nations rise and nations fall. But the Kingdom of God through the church of Christ will move victoriously through history. Calvin said it nicely:

Against all the power of Satan the firmness of the Church will prove to be invincible, because the truth of God, on which the faith of the Church rests, will ever remain unshaken. And to this statement corresponds that saying of

*John, This is the victory which overcometh the world, your faith, (1 John 5:4.)*²

But Calvin makes another observation which I believe we should take to heart:

Yet this passage also instructs us, that so long as the Church shall continue to be a pilgrim on the earth, she will never enjoy rest, but will be exposed to many attacks; for, when it is declared that Satan will not conquer, this implies that he will be her constant enemy.³

Let us not lose sight of the spiritual war in which we are all engaged. One last word regarding the transgression of the Edomites. Obadiah has been called the Prophet of Poetic Justice, because his prophecy of judgment contains the principle that they will be condemned in the same way they condemned others.

For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head (Obadiah 1:15).

Treachery, robbery, sword and destruction is the world in which they chose to live, and it will be the means by which they will be overrun. Jesus briefly called upon this principle when He told Peter that **“all who take the sword will perish by the sword (Matthew 26:52b)**. By these words Jesus wasn't suggesting that there is never a use for a sword (Exodus 22:2; Romans 13:4). But He is saying that if the means by which you think we are successfully govern ourselves through our lives is by human force or even ingenuity, we will have a sad end.

This principle extends into our view of the faith. As we have learned elsewhere, if we have a view of the faith which excludes forgiveness (e.g.

² Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 291–292). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

³ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 291–292). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

“forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”) then we have a religion devoid of forgiveness-and that lack of forgiveness will be turned toward us. In the same sermon Jesus taught that we **“be judged”** by the same judgment that we judge others (Matthew 7:1, 2). That shouldn't be a scary statement to those who live in a religious world which consists of forgiveness, grace and mercy. For the unforgiving person, those words should be a terror.

Christ in Obadiah

There are no obvious types or foreshadows of Christ in Obadiah. Similar to most of what we read in God's dealings with Israel, the entirety of the nation typifies and instructs regarding God's promises. It is important to understand (against a very popular error) that the Old Covenant was not a covenant of works but of grace. Israel (Israel and Judah) was God's Old Covenant Church by the promise of the blood of Christ. It was for this reason that Jesus could teach that the Scriptures were about Him.

All this to say that citizenship in the Kingdom of God in the New Covenant by the blood of Christ grants us His favor and Fatherly preservation and protection. Let us enjoy the tenderness found in the Old Testament words toward His covenant people. Like a parent, waking up their beloved small child and taking them for a walk around the block:

O Lord, You have searched me and known *me*.² You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.³ You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.⁴ For *there is not* a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.⁵ You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it* (Psalm 139:1-6).

These Fatherly affections belong to all who call upon the Name of Christ.

Questions for Study

1. Why is it necessary to admit that we are powerless (pages 2, 3)?
2. In what respect has humanity come to the end of itself when it comes to our greatest enemies (pages 2, 3)?
3. Who were the Edomites and how were they affected by their ancestry (pages 3, 4)?
4. Explain the wisdom of the request found in Proverbs 30:7-9 (page 4).
5. Describe some of Edom's cancerous personal properties (page 4).
6. What were the two main reasons that God brought destruction upon Edom (pages 4-6)?
7. In what respect should we either judge or not judge others (pages 6, 7)?
8. What does Obadiah teach us when it comes to Christ and the New Covenant (page 7)?