



“Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD” (Obadiah 4).

Warnings Against Pride

Central Truth: The prophet warned of God’s displeasure with human arrogance.

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Topic: Judgment: Of Men; Pride.

Meet Obadiah, prophet of the Lord. His is the shortest book in the Old Testament, composed of only twenty-one verses in a single chapter. Our information on the person of Obadiah is as brief as the book he left to bear his name. There are thirteen persons in the Old Testament who bore that name. It was a very common name through many centuries of Hebrew history, so there is no specific information about which man wrote the book.

The Obadiah of our text lived in the tragic days when Jerusalem was destroyed. We date him around 586 B.C., when the third deportation into the Babylonian captivity of Judah came to pass.

The text of the book is a message against Edom. Filled with pride in their own strength, the Edomites gloated when Jerusalem was overthrown by the Babylonians. Obadiah wrote to warn them against such sinful pride and announced a judgment upon all those who were proud.

The lesson we must learn from Obadiah is God's displeasure against human arrogance in any person under any condition. It is a warning for today as much as for ancient times.

The lesson should be reviewed against this word recorded in the book of Proverbs, *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look. . . .”* (Proverbs 6:16, 17). Beware of the sin of pride.

I. PRIDE PRODUCES FALSE SECURITY (Obadiah 1-4)

The people of “*Edom*” were the descendants of Esau, who is called the father of Edom. They intermarried with various clans which lived around them and founded a relatively strong kingdom. Their land was south and west of the Dead Sea all the way to the Gulf of Aqabah. The area is largely desert, but there are areas of productive farm land.

There was always animosity between the Edomites and the Israelites. The conflict probably goes back to the affair between Jacob and Esau, the forefathers of each clan. Esau traded his birthright to Jacob for a single meal of food and afterwards planned to kill his brother for taking it. Jacob fled from Esau and it was twenty years before they met again. The brothers were reconciled, but their descendants were not.

The king of Edom would not permit Israel to pass through his land on their exodus from Egypt (Numbers 20:14). War broke out between Israel and Edom during the reign of Saul and continued for a long time. David killed eighteen thousand Edomites at one time. Amaziah later killed ten thousand of them in battle. It is no wonder that the descendants of those ancient people rejoiced to see Judah receive what they thought was “justice” when she was overthrown and taken away into Babylonian captivity.

Edom's dwellings are said to be “in the clefts of the rocks,” a probable reference to the ragged cliffs among which the people lived. Petra, a city carved into the rock cliffs, was the capital of the Edomite kingdom.

The national pride was so great that they asked one another, “Who can overthrow us? Who can bring us down?” They did not take God into consideration with such questions (Jeremiah 21:13, 14). But then, a person filled with himself (with pride) seldom considers God.

The appeal of Holy Scripture is the opposite of pride. The Bible calls, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. . . . Draw nigh to God. . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord*” (James 4:7, 8, 10).

At the very time Edom was boasting of her strength and security, God said, “*I have made thee small.*” He has a different perspective from the way we look. What appears big to us is so small it is as nothing to Him.

Learn this twofold truth. (1) Pride deceives. It makes one feel important and strong. God says it weakens one's defenses and invites destruction (Proverbs 17:19). He says, “*Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes*” (Isaiah 5:21). “*He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul*” (Isaiah 44:20). At the time one says, “*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,*” God says he is “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (Revelation

3:17). That is what pride does to a person; it deceives him.

(2) The proud person must answer to God. King Nebuchadnezzar learned that the hard way. At the time he was walking in his palace boasting of his great accomplishments, God sent a judgment of insanity upon him that lasted until he acknowledged the supremacy of the God of heaven (Daniel 4:30-37). King Hezekiah learned that lesson, also. *"His heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him"* (II Chronicles 32:25).

You will find the same awaiting you if you permit pride to rule your thoughts. *"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble"* (James 4:6). No wonder the Bible admonishes, *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord"* (James 4:10). It is better to humble oneself willingly before God than to stand against Him in pride.

II. PRIDE CREATES A SPIRIT OF SELFISH UNCONCERN (Obadiah 10-12)

Edom had no sympathy for the sufferings brought by the siege of Jerusalem. (People became so hungry they ate human flesh, hundreds died, and thousands were taken as captives into a foreign land.) They did not weep over innocent children starving, dying, or becoming slaves. All they thought of was that someone else was oppressing their enemy. They rejoiced at that overthrow of Judah.

They did not heed the word from God, *"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him"* (Proverbs 24:17, 18). God saw Edom's rejoicing at the fall of Judah and turned His wrath upon Edom. Today the capital city called Petra stands uninhabited and is a site for tourists to visit and marvel.

Let us learn these lessons. (1) Selfish pride promotes violence. Violence and robbery accompany spiritual ignorance as the twin sisters of pride (Amos 3:10). Those who covet fields take them by violence, oppressing a man and his house for personal gain (Micah 2:2). God sees that and issues judgment fitting.

(2) Pride is followed by shame. *"When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom"* (Proverbs 11:2). *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"* (Proverbs 16:18). *"A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit"* (Proverbs 29:23). How many times must God say it for us to receive the warning? Beware of the proud spirit which is an abomination before God.

(3) To do wrong brings wrong. *"Woe to him that coveteth an evil"*

covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high. . . . Thou hast consulted shame to thy house” (Habakkuk 2:9, 10). “His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate” (Psalm 7:16). God's law of retribution is, the evil that men intend toward others will return multiplied upon themselves.

(4) Never rejoice over the sufferings of another person. On the contrary, *“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). Let the spirit of Jesus govern your attitude toward those who are suffering. Pride makes oneself number one in interest; humility makes the other person important.*

II. PRIDE SHALL BE DESTROYED BY WHAT IT DESPISED (Obadiah 17, 18)

Obadiah promised deliverance to God's people. *“The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it” (verse 18).*

Judah would arise from her overthrow and overthrow Edom. *“Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined” (Psalm 10:2).*

Justice will triumph; right will prevail. That divine principle runs throughout the Bible. *“I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exodus 20:5). God “repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face” (Deuteronomy 7:10).*

If that sounds like too harsh an action for God to perform, remember how pride appears to Him. He hates it and it is an abomination! People may look upon it as a lesser sin, but to God it is akin to idolatry. It is a high insult to Him. Flee from pride as you would flee from a serpent. It is poison to your spiritual health.

IV. PRIDE SHALL BE BROKEN AND THE LORD SHALL REIGN (Obadiah 21)

“Saviours shall come up on mount Zion . . . ; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S” (verse 21). Judah was bowed, but she was not broken. She was disciplined, but she was not cast off. She was taken into bondage, but she

would not remain there. She will arise from her ashes, a remnant will be the people through whom God will yet bring a blessing to all the nations of the world.

A. God fights against the proud. Those who go to the clefts of the rocks, into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord will discover that He is able to shake the whole earth (Isaiah 2:21). *“Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch”* (Malachi 4:1). *“The hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies”* (Isaiah 66:14).

B. God gives grace to the humble. *“Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12). *“He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree”* (Luke 1:52). *“He giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”* (James 4:6). *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”* (1 Peter 5:6, 7).

What practical lessons might be drawn from this study? (1) Pride is foolish. Some people will always be inferior to you in some area while others will always be superior to you in other areas. (2) Pride is foolish, for God is always superior to you. (3) Acknowledge your true worth before God (you are made in His image) and be humble before Him. (4) Accept yourself as God has made you — beauty and blemish — and live for Him alone. (5) Be humble in spirit, knowing that pride challenges God to battle while humility receives His grace.

Questions

1. What do you know of Obadiah?
2. What is the theme of his book?
3. Who were the Edomites?
4. Why is pride so serious a sin?
5. What is the appeal in James 4:7-10?
6. How does Isaiah 44:20 relate to this study?
7. What application does Proverbs 24:17, 18 have today?
8. Why does pride always go before destruction and shame?
9. What does Deuteronomy 7:10 mean to you?
10. How can you develop a spirit of humility in your heart?