

Study Prophets – Become Prophetic (Week 4: Obadiah)

Obadiah 1:17, 21

We're in **Week 4** today of our sermon series "*Study Prophets – Become Prophetic.*"

By now, you'll understand more that the goal of this study is not just to get more *information* but transformation. We hear what He says, feel God's heart, be changed by it, and then speak it with **boldness and humility**.

As we said last week from Amos: *We speak because God speaks.*

Today's prophet is one of those names in the Bible you may not be quite sure how to say it correctly: *Obadiah*. (It's not *Oh-buh-DIE-uh*, *OB-uh-day-uh*, or *Obad-yeah*!)

Who is Obadiah?

His name means "**Servant of Yahweh**," or "Servant of the Lord."

But other than that, we know nothing about him— no parents listed, no hometown, no background story. Just one chapter with *21 verses*. The shortest book in the Old Testament.

But as one preacher said,

"Sometimes God's smallest packages carry His biggest punches."

Let's pray before we open this tiny but mighty book.

Prayer:

Lord, as we dive into Your Word today,

open our eyes to see Your glory.

Open our ears to hear what You are saying.

Open our hearts to feel the burden of Your heart.

Open our mouths to speak what You speak.

Bless our hands and feet to do what is right and to walk humbly with You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's start at verse 1:

"The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Sovereign Lord says about Edom."

Now, that's interesting. Because most prophets are preaching to Israel or Judah—God's people. But Obadiah says, "Today's sermon is about... Edom."

So, to understand this book, we need to ask: *Who were the Edomites?*

This takes us back to Genesis 25, to Rebekah giving birth to **Jacob and Esau**. They were twins, and Scripture says they were already wrestling in the womb.

So, Rebekah asks, "Why is this happening to me?" (What's going on with these babies?) And God told her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated. ..." (Genesis 25:23a)

And that became true. Later, Jacob became the father of Israel; Esau became the father of Edom. So, Israel and Edom were literally family nations—brothers.

But if you've ever raised siblings, you know: that doesn't mean peace on earth. From that stew incident onward, their rivalry just... never stopped. It is the Bible's longest sibling conflict drama.

Fast-forward several centuries to Obadiah's time: now, **Judah** was smashed by **Babylonians** around **586 B.C.**

Jerusalem's walls are crumbling. People are running for their lives.

And what does Edom—the brother nation—do?

Do they help? Do they offer refuge? Do they say, "We've got you, fam"?

Nope.

They did the terrible thing.

They join Babylonians.

And with them, they loot the city together. They even block the escape routes, and they capture fleeing Judeans and hand them over to the enemy.

Think about this. It's like your brother's house getting robbed—and instead of calling 911, you run inside and say, "Hey, thief! I know where my brother keeps the cash!"

Also, you grab your brother's TV and say, "Thanks, bro—it's mine now!"

That's exactly what Edom did to Judah.
 They didn't just stand by; they celebrated Judah's downfall.
 And God said, "That's not just ugly—that's wicked."

Now, let's talk geography for a moment, because it will add more perspective to this story.

First of all, the word *Edom* means "**red.**" That's partly because Esau was red-haired, but also because Edom's landscape was full of **red sandstone cliffs**.

You can still see them today in **southern Jordan**, and there you'll find an ancient city called, **Petra** — the "rose-red city, half as old as time."

That's Edomite country. Their homes and temples were literally carved into cliffs. The only way to get there was through narrow mountain paths. So, basically, they sheltered in natural fortresses.

So they thought, "We're untouchable. We live in the high places. Nobody can reach us."

And on top of that, these people were known for their wisdom. The book of **Job**, for instance, mentions **Eliphaz, one of Job's three friends, was the Temanite** (Job 2:11). And **Teman** is a city of Edom, and Jeremiah 49:7 says Teman was famous for its wise men.

In short, the Edomites were smart and secured, surrounded by natural protection.

In today's context, they might be Harvard grads who live in the Rocky Mountains.

The point is they had intelligence and altitude—and that combo made them arrogant and prideful.

The Edomites were prideful people.

That's what's causing the problem.

Listen to what God says:

“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’ Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the Lord. (vv. 3–4)

That’s terrifying. God’s basically saying,
 “You think you’re untouchable (invincible)? Watch Me.”

Then, He goes on:

“In that day, ... will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau? Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau’s mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.” (vv. 8-9).

God declares, “When I bring my justice, your wisdom, your strength will not save you.”

God says:

“Because of the violence against your brother Jacob,
 you will be covered with shame;
 you will be destroyed forever.” (v. 10).

Then comes the heart of this book.

God lists seven charges against Edom—each one starts with the same phrase:

“You should not have...”

Listen to this list from *The Message* version:

“You shouldn’t have gloated over your brother when he was down-and-out.
 You shouldn’t have laughed and joked when Judah’s sons were facedown in the mud.
 You shouldn’t have talked so big when everything was so bad.
 You shouldn’t have taken advantage of My people when their lives had fallen apart.
 You shouldn’t have been amused by their troubles.
 You shouldn’t have taken the shirt off their back.
 You shouldn’t have stood waiting to cut off refugees or handed over survivors.”

God’s verdict is clear: **“You should not have done that.”**

You should not have **cheered** Judah’s destruction.

You should not have committed evil to your own brother.

Their cruelty was so massive that even psalmist recorded it:

“Remember, O Lord, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell, when they shouted, ‘Tear it down! Tear it down to its foundations!’” (137:7)

Israel’s own “brother” cheered the invaders. They were even yelling with the enemies, “Yeah! Burn it all down!” That is why God’s wrath burns against Edom.

At this point, we may shake our heads at Edom, thinking, “Yeah, they shouldn’t have done that.” But what about us?

We may not loot other cities, but we still can **loot someone’s dignity** with our words.

We may have never handed people over to Babylonians, but we still can hand our own brothers and sisters over to **gossip** or judgement.

We may have never said, “Tear it down,” but maybe we’ve silently nodded when someone’s reputation was being torn down—and perhaps, we even felt a thrill (a joy, a cheer) inside, thinking, “He deserve that!” “She earned that!” “That serves you right!”

And listen what God will still say, **“You should not have done that.”**

The root problem is our pride issue.

You see, pride is sneaky. Pride deceives us into thinking we’re better, smarter, safer. Pride **blinds** us to compassion. It builds **invisible cliffs** around our hearts—it takes us to a higher place. We think we’re the wise ones “up here” while others are “down there.”

But as someone said,

“Pride doesn’t make you taller—it just makes everyone else look smaller.”

Friends, remember this:

Always, pride comes before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

So let’s pause here for a moment.

Ask yourself:

Have I ever rejoiced over someone else’s failure?

Maybe a rival at work?

A person in church who offended me?

A family member who “finally got what they deserved”?

If you have ever thought in such way, hear God’s voice:

“You should not have done that.”

God’s people don’t rejoice in others’ ruin — even when it seems deserved.

The mark of Christians is not pride, but compassion.

Back to Obadiah. So far the focus has been on Edom – its pride, its abuse of his own brother, and as consequence, God’s sure wrath and its fall.

But after all that, here’s an interesting thing happens.

Obadiah zooms out.

His preaching is not about Edom anymore.

Now, his preaching expands to **“all nations.”**

Look at verse 15:

“The day of the Lord is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.”

It’s as if God is saying to every people and every nation, “Listen up, everyone! You see what happened to Edom? That’s a case study. Edom is just an **example**. What you’ve learned from Edom, apply it to yourselves.”

And the lesson is clear:

“As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.”

In other words, if you want compassion, plant compassion.

If you want love, plant love.

If you want mercy, plant mercy.

What you saw, you’ll reap.

It’s like boomerang.

What you throw comes back.

This echoes Jesus' words:

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31)

Say this to your neighbor.

That's the golden rule from God for all humanity.

This week I heard something interesting about a recent study on figuring out why is it that some kids are really popular in their school. You might think it's because they're funny, attractive, or athletic—like that one kid in third grade who can do a backflip.

That could be a factor, but not the denominator.

The study found there was one variable that was found in every popular kid, and that was not their talents or confidence—but they were the ones who “liked” a lot of people. They had longest list of classmates they said they liked.

Simply put, they just liked many people.

So, their popularity wasn't built on trying to impress others; it was built on *appreciating* others.

They were liked because they liked others first.

And that made me think... why do I hear so many people today say, “I like Jesus, but I don't like the church”?

Something to think about, right?

Back to Obadiah.

Verse 17: “*But* on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and Jacob will possess his inheritance.”

That one little word—“**But**”—changes everything.

Because even when nations fail, when brothers betray, when pride ruins people—**God still promises deliverance.**

And the mark of that deliverance is **Holiness.**

“But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy.”

Holy means “set apart,” “different.”

As God is different from the world, “be holy” is God’s way of saying, “My people don’t act like everyone else.” “My people should be different.”

If the **worldly** way is pride; My **people’s way** should be **compassion**.

If the worldly way is **give-and-take**; my people’s way should be **sacrificial love**.

If the worldly people build houses on **cliffs of their pride**, my people should build on the **mountain of holiness** and **humility**.

This points us straight to Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Think about how Jesus conquered this world.

It wasn’t through retaliation. Jesus was mocked and beaten by the people. But He did not say, “You’ll regret this.” Rather, He prayed, “**Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.**”

That is **holiness**. That is different from the world.

That is the **Mount Zion deliverance**.

That is what separates God’s people from this “sin-sick” world.

Beloved,

We cannot drive out darkness with more darkness—only light can do that.

As John wrote, “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*” (John 1:5)

We cannot overcome evil with more evil—only goodness has that power.

Paul reminds us, “*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*” (Romans 12:21)

The book ends with one of the most powerful lines in the Bible:

“Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau, and the **kingdom will be the Lord’s.**” (v. 21)

Think about this. This prophet begins with the story of betrayal, abuse, violence, hatred, pride, but it ends with giving us the glimpse of the Kingdom of God. **“The kingdom will be the Lord’s!”**

It gives us that hope that eventually, God will rule over this world.

His justice will roll down like a river, and His righteousness run like a mighty stream.

On that day, **every wrong will be made right, the pride will be crushed, the humble will be exalted, every tear will be wiped away, and every nation, every language will gather under one King.**

That’s the final picture of our world.

So, until then, God is urging His people, don’t be like Edomites, be like My people, who shall live in my Kingdom, and display it to the world.

By how?

Not through **revenge**, but **forgiveness**.

Not through **looting** others; **blessing** them.

Not through **joining gossip**; **praying** for them.

Not saying, **“Tear them down – they deserve it!”**; but praying, **“How can I build you up?”**

“How can I help you to come back to God?”

Even to our enemies.

That’s God’s heart.

That’s the Way of Christ.

This week, I’ve seen postings going around on my social media about how the **United Methodist Church** has been shrinking—from 11 million in 1967 to under 4 million today. Now, we left that denomination, so, we know issues are there.

But if Obadiah could speak to us, I think he’d say: “Don’t gloat. Don’t cheer. Never say they deserve it. But pray.”

Pray that God’s **mercy**, not our pride, has the final word.

In your personal life, too—when a coworker who mistreated you fails on his task, or when that family member who drove you crazy hits rock bottom—may our reaction never be: Feeling good about it, or say or think, “Lol, it serves you right!” That’s an Edomite reaction.

God calls us to something far better: to pray, to forgive, and to let God handle justice.

Because **vengeance is the Lord’s—but compassion belongs to us.**

The truth is all of us are guilty in this matter one way or another.

So, as the Holy Spirit nudges our hearts, maybe He’s whispering, “You should not have done that.”

When that happens, may we come to the Lord with a repenting heart and say,

“God, I’m sorry for acting like an Edomite.

I’m sorry for my pride.

Please crush what needs to be crushed.

Restore what needs to be restored,

so that I can live differently—

so that I can be holy as You are holy,

and more like Jesus Christ.”

And here is the good news:

The goodnews is

The same God who said, “You should not have done that,”

also says, “Come to Me.”

There is **deliverance on Mount Zion.**

There is **mercy at the Cross.**

And His blood can wash away all our sins and make us new.

As mentioned in the beginning, the book of Obadiah may be short, but its message is powerful.

God is still speaking to us today:

“Don’t rejoice over your brother’s downfall.

**Don't let your pride blind you to compassion.
 Don't stay on the cliffs of pride saying, 'I'm fine up here.'
 Climb down. Kneel at the Cross,
 where every proud heart is humbled
 and every wounded soul is healed."**

So, my friends,
 Let's come down from the high places.
 Lay down our pride, our grudges, our sinful hearts.
 Let's not just tear our garments—tear our hearts.
 And let the holiness and compassion of Jesus rule over us.

So when we see someone stumble this week, let's not stand on our high cliffs shouting, "Tear it down!"

But we climb down, reach out, and lift them up—
 because that's exactly what Jesus did for you and me.
That's how we become prophetic in our world today.

Let us pray.

Lord of justice and mercy,

Thank you for this small but powerful book.

We confess that too often we've stood on the cliffs of our own pride—rejoicing when others fall, judging others when You've called us to love, and defending our own honor more than Your holiness.

Forgive us, Lord. Bring us down from our high places, and teach us to walk humbly with You. Deliver us, O God, from the spirit of Edom, and fill us with the Spirit of Christ—the One who prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

For those who have drifted—Your sons and daughters who've wandered—Lord, whisper, "Come to Me." Give them courage now to return, to lay down sin and shame, and to be restored on Mount Zion's holiness.

For those who are seeking and not yet sure, shine Your light into their darkness. Let them sense Your love, hear Your call, and take a first step of trust in You as their Lord and Savior.

May Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth and in our hearts, as it is in heaven.

In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

Reflection Questions

1. Where in my life am I standing on a “cliff of pride,” thinking I’m untouchable or superior to someone else?
2. Who is one person I’ve quietly rejoiced to see fail—someone I now need to forgive or pray for?
3. What does it look like for me this week to live as one “set apart”—holy and compassionate—when the world says, “Tear it down”?
4. In what ways can our church community display the “Mount Zion deliverance”—a holiness that lifts others up rather than tearing them down?