

## **Intro**

This morning we consider the book of Obadiah. And we encounter a familiar theme: pride. In Zephaniah, we encountered the pride of Assyria: *“I am, and there is no one else”* (Zeph 2:15). Brash self-confidence. The feeling of invincibility. God has no place. His will is irrelevant.

We might not be so brash. We certainly wouldn't say I am unaccountable to God or God's will has no place in my life. But we might have subtle feelings of invincibility. Subtle overconfidence in ourselves. Subtle attitudes that suggest we really don't need God. Like Edom, we need must **beware of thinking we're in better shape than we actually are.**

Let's look to Obadiah for guidance on the nature of pride.

## **READ PASSAGE**

## **PRAY**

## **Body**

### **Intro to Obadiah**

Author: a prophet named Obadiah whom we know little about

Background:

- 1) Israel divided between North (10 tribes) and South (Judah and Benjamin)
- 2) North fell to Assyria in 722 BC
- 3) South fell to Babylon in 586 BC (Zephaniah's near day of the LORD)

- temple burned to the ground
- only the poor left
- many taken as exiles to Babylon

- 4) Edom took advantage of the Babylonian destruction (1:11)...and God took note

Date: sometime after 586 BC and before 553 BC

Audience: Those left in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:12), the exiles in Babylon, or both. Perhaps the message reached Edom? Directed at Edom, for Judah.

Purpose: To provide hope for the people of Judah. God hasn't abandoned them. Restoration is promised.

## Point 1: Pride resides in the heart (1:3)

### Explanation

God has a message about Edom. We = a community of prophets or a Jewish community from Judah. The sent messenger is Obadiah. The us that will rise up = the nations who will execute God's judgment on Edom.

God has a problem with Edom's pride. So God will make her "*small among the nations.*" Pride met with divine humbling.

The essence of Edom's pride is found in verse 3:

*"Who will bring me down to the ground?" – 1:3*

Edom thought they were invincible. Impervious to defeat. Why? Because they lived "*in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling.*"

Edom's civilization centers were located in narrow mountain lands with ridges exceeding 5,000 feet high. Access from the north and the west were denied due to gorges, steep rocky walls not suitable for climbing. The east was situated on high hills, and access was near impossible due to a long series of fortresses where fire and smoke signals would easily alert the compound of foreign threat. The only access was through the south, where the high plateaus ended. However, the southern section was heavily defended by a line of fortresses.

This explains Edom's alleged invincibility. God says, "You appear invincible, but I will bring you down" (1:4). Edom's fall described:

- 1) Thieves take only the items they want, they don't take everything, and grape gatherers leave behind unhealthy clusters and what's fallen to the ground, but when Esau is pillaged there will be nothing left (1:5-6). Complete devastation.
- 2) Friends and allies will turn on Edom, which will come as a surprise (1:7).
- 3) On "*that day,*" the day God acts in judgment on Edom, God will defeat the wisdom and military might of Edom (1:8-9).
- 4) The devastation will be thorough: "*every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.*"

Obadiah's message was fulfilled in 553 BC when Babylon conquered Edom. Edom apparently had some sort of alliance with Babylon prior to the invasion.

### Pride

God singles out Edom for her pride. The word for pride in 1:3 stems from "to boil." It speaks of our sense of self-importance (**thinking too highly of ourselves**), which is often expressed in defiance and rebellion. Our three points represent three aspects of pride we see in the text.

### In the heart

*“The pride of your heart has deceived you” – 1:3*

The heart is our inner being. Our spirit. Our soul. The place from which springs our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, desires, words, habits, and actions.

Internal thoughts, emotions, attitudes, desires give rise to external words, habits, actions. This is why we must guard our hearts:

*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. – Prov 4:23*

What’s inside has a way of manifesting itself:

*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. – Jas 1:14-15*

We’re enticed by what’s already in us: our desires. Our internal desires result in external sin.

*But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. – Jas 3:14-16*

If jealousy and selfish ambition exist on the inside, contentious relationships and numerous sins are sure to spring up. That’s James’ logic. Again, what’s inside manifests itself on the outside. So internal attitudes are critical.

### **Illustration**

A young preacher **rises** to prominence quickly. Their church grows quickly, they sell books, they speak at large conferences, they have podcasts, they’re viewed as an expert (when they shouldn’t be). So they become puffed up. They **forget** that any fruit they’ve experienced comes from God. They forget that any wisdom they have comes from God. They forget that they’re actually a novice. They **begin to desire** the applause. They love being important. They love being the one everyone looks to. They love having a platform. They come to **see themselves** as infallible. They forget their own need for wisdom. They’re ignorant of their need for correction. They **surround themselves** with yes men. They remove those who challenge them. They have their yes men cover up their ungodly patterns. They find themselves **thinking they’re invincible**. God’s blessing on the ministry authorizes their behavior.

What’s happening? Inside, the heart is being puffed up. They forget about God’s part in their “success.” They’re ignorant of spiritual failure and they’re too important to be corrected. Internal pride has external results: godly removed from leadership, yes men in their place, cover-ups.

**Pride resides in the heart.** Internal pride results in external conduct. Beware of letting pride fester!

### **Point 2: Pride is self-deception**

*“The pride of your heart has deceived you” – 1:3*

Pride deceived Edom into thinking they were invincible. Surely we are secure. Surely no one could penetrate our defense. We have fortresses and the high ground. Nothing could happen to us.

In the case of fast-rising, young celebrity preachers, they think they’re invincible too. Everything is going so well. The fruit must be a sign of God’s blessing. God must really think a lot of me. The last thing they’re thinking is pride may be my downfall. The “success” blinds them to what’s actually happening in their heart. **Pride deceives us into thinking that we’re in better shape than we actually are.** Proverbs 16:18 puts it like this:

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. – Prov 16:18

**Pride as self-deception** = inability or failure to see. When we think too much of ourselves, we can’t assess our situation accurately. We think we’re in better shape than we actually are.

### **Illustrations**

As a pastor, for me it would be something like thinking I’m an exceptional preacher, an exceptional pastor who really doesn’t lack much of anything. What would result from this sort of self-deception?

I wouldn’t make any effort to learn. Whether learning about preaching better or counseling better or leading meetings better or handling disputes better or helping a person go through a specific trial. If I think I already know enough or I have little to learn, why would I invest time in learning how to pastor? Imagine a pastor who never researched any of the issues facing his people because he thought he was beyond improvement!

I wouldn’t be open to correction. Why would I be? I already do is flawless. Helpful suggestions would fall on deaf ears. Problems would go unaddressed. Character flaws would remain unchallenged.

I wouldn’t seek godly counsel for the challenges I face. I don’t need help because I’m perfectly competent in most everything. What could anyone else add to what I already know? I would deprive myself of the help God has provided in wise Christian friends.

I wouldn’t make any progress. I’d stay the same. People under my care wouldn’t be helped as they could be. Ministries would never improve. I’d suffer from the same wrong habits. No growth in Christlikeness.

For you it might be something like thinking I’m a good enough small group leader already. I don’t have room for improvement. I’m a good enough elder. I don’t have room for improvement. I’m a good enough parent. I don’t have room for improvement. In the workforce, I’m a good enough electrician or nurse or school teacher. I don’t have room for improvement.

If we think like that we won’t make any effort to learn. We won’t be open to correction. We won’t seek godly counsel. We won’t make any progress. We’ll stay the same. Same old problems and habits will remain. We won’t honor God as we could. We’ll fail to minister to

others as we could. We won't be salt and light to the watching world like we could be. I guess what I'm saying is that the Christian life is a life of progress and thinking we're in better shape than we actually are prevents us from desiring progress.

Our church mission statement reads: *"We exist to glorify God by building a community that is growing in Christlikeness and making new disciples."*

One of the reasons we exist as a church is to grow in Christlikeness. Growth occurs in community. If we think there's no room for progress in our lives, we won't make use of this community God has established for our spiritual good. We won't let the body help us because we think we're in better shape than we actually are. One reason we need the local church is because we need people who help us see what we don't see!

If I were honest, I'd say about 10 years ago I thought I had grown enough. I thought things like, "I don't really want to grow anymore. I'm happy where I'm at." Somehow I thought I couldn't grow much more as a Christian. Being in a healthy local church helped me see numerous areas where I lacked. Being a pastor, being a parent, being a husband, shows me where I lack.

We need to have a humility that says I have room for improvement. I need the help of the body.

Prideful thinking has consequences. Don't be deceived by your own pride!

### **Point 3: Pride makes us feel invincible**

Edom says in her heart, *"Who will bring me down to the ground?"* – 1:3

That's the feeling of invincibility. Their fortresses and high ground made them feel like no one could conquer them. Pride manifesting itself in the heart in the form of an attitude.

### **Illustration: the Christian who says I got this**

How does this prideful attitude manifest itself in the life of the Christian? One way is the brash confidence that says I got this. I can handle it. I'm strong. I'm competent. Practically meaning I don't need God's help. I don't need the church.

Biblical spirituality isn't saying I'm invincible, it's saying I'm deeply needy.

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* – John 15:5

The Bible is honest about our weakness and need for divine aid:

*Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.* – Ps 62:8

- a troubled heart requires a God who listens; a troubled heart needs a God who protects

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* – 2 Cor 1:3-4

- a persecuted people needs a comforting God

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. – 2 Cor 12:9*

- a people weakened by physical ailments (likely the meaning of Paul's thorn in the flesh) or demonic harassment or persecution needs a God who provides empowering grace

*At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! <sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. – 2 Tim 4:16-17*

- a believer on trial and facing death needs a God who stands with them and strengthens them

If our attitude is I got this (I'm invincible!), we won't seek God! You're not invincible, so don't think you are. Invite the Lord's help into your weakness. One way we do this is by inviting the local church to help us spiritually and practically.

Some of us are going through hard times. God understands. He helps. So seek him.

Don't put your confidence in the wrong place. Yourself. Your finances. Your strength. Your wisdom. Your charisma. Your connections. Place your confidence in God. This is humility.

When we think we're invincible, we're blinded to our weaknesses. So was the case with Edom. Don't think you're tougher than you are! God gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6).

### **Gospel Connection**

Pride goes before a fall. The way we come (humility) is the way we live the Christian life. Sanctification, Christlikeness comes through humility. We start by trusting Christ and turning from our sin. We come to the realization that our works reveal our sin, not our righteousness. We trust in a Savior who suffered in our place. We confess our sin and receive divine mercy. We humble ourselves before the Creator of the universe.

As we strive towards sanctification (the process of becoming more Christlike), we do so with humility, not brash self-confidence in our own invincibility. In humility, we share our weakness with God and call on him to help us in our lack. We make use of the ordinary means of growth (Bible reading, prayer, journaling, church gatherings, etc.) because we know we are weak.

### **Conclusion**

**Pride resides in the heart.** Beware of attitudes forming inside you. **Pride is self-deception.** Beware of overestimating yourself. **Pride makes us feel invincible.** Remember how much you need God.