

Sunday, September 26, 2021
Obadiah 10-21 (When God's People Suffer)
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Intro

God's people suffer in this life. The fact that sin came into the world makes this inevitable. And the fact that God is universally opposed makes this inevitable. God demands repentance and he holds us accountable. He makes demands on our lives. So rebellion exists. Jesus puts it like this:

'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. – John 15:20-21

God's people are opposed because they stand for the God who is opposed. If you want to keep track of challenges Christians in our nation are facing, check out adflegal.org (Alliance Defending Freedom). These are facts, not conspiracy theories.

One ongoing case involves Seattle's Union Gospel Mission. This Gospel Mission is an evangelical organization founded upon the Bible's teachings that has been in existence for 90 years. Their focus is meeting the practical needs of the homeless and addiction recovery. The recovery program teaches about surrendering one's life to Jesus and the hope of new life in the Spirit. A lawyer wanted to work for them, but they require that every employee subscribe to their beliefs and conduct requirements. In March 2021, the Washington State Supreme Court decided that the Constitution doesn't protect the Mission's desire to operate according to their beliefs = it is unlawful to require certain beliefs and conduct for employment. The Gospel Mission faces an impossible choice: violate your beliefs or stop ministering to the homeless.

[Seattle's Union Gospel Mission \(SUGM\) v. Woods | Alliance Defending Freedom \(adflegal.org\)](http://Seattle's Union Gospel Mission (SUGM) v. Woods | Alliance Defending Freedom (adflegal.org))

We aren't being beheaded or imprisoned. But the state is saying religious organizations aren't legally allowed to require their employees to affirm Christian doctrine (doctrine matters!) and abide by Christian conduct (character matters!). Preventing Christian ministries from functioning as Christian ministries.

What does this have to do with Obadiah? Well, **Obadiah is kind of like a letter written to the church about the fate of their persecutors.** In Obadiah's message, God is telling the survivors of Judah, the believing remnant, that he saw what happened (what Edom did) and he's going to do something about it (near punishment in 553 BC and at the final judgment). No longer strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph 2:12-13), these promises belong to us. God sees what is done to his church. He may act on the Mission's behalf now. He will certainly act on the Mission's behalf on the day of the LORD. There's confidence that God rules his creation, that justice will be served, that suffering will end, that we will dwell with God forever!

God sees when we're sinned against and Obadiah is his answer!

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Point 1: Love your brothers and sisters (10-14)

Explanation

“Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob”

Because = God has reasons for why he does what he does. God isn't erratic. God doesn't act on a whim. God's actions flow out of his goodness and justice. God cares when people mistreat those created in his image. Edom's judgment wasn't random. Verses 11-14 detail God's charges against Edom:

1) “stood aloof” (1:11)

- The events described in verse 11 refer to the pillaging and destruction of Judah at the hands of Babylon that occurred in 597 and 586 BC (2 Kgs 24:10-25:12).
- Judah suffered through the fear of an invading army, death, and exile, pains of death at the hands of a cruel and sadistic army, sadness and grief over loss of loved ones and property and freedom. Captivity and exile.
- Edom saw this happening and just stood by, doing nothing. And they liked what they saw.

2) “gloat...rejoice...boast” (1:12)

- This was unacceptable because Jacob was Esau's brother. Judah and Edom descended from the same parents, Isaac and Rebekah. Edom celebrated the suffering of their brother.

3) “loot” (1:13)

- Evidently opportunistic Edom made off with some of Judah's wealth.

4) “cut off...hand over” (1:14)

- Evidently Edom prevented fleeing Jews from escaping Babylon and handed them over. Think Germans handing over Jews in World War II.

Commands directed at Edom after the fact. Why? To let Judah know that God saw what Edom did and he wasn't pleased.

Application

The picture is one's brother viewed as a rival whose destruction is celebrated. Specifically, enjoying **when one's family is sinned against**. They got there's! Doing nothing to alleviate the suffering. Contributing to the suffering ourselves. Profiting from their suffering. That's what's going on here. We're not talking about enabling selfishness, foolishness, or sinful patterns. We're talking about no compassion on family that's been sinned against.

Even if Judah deserved this punishment, because they broke the old/Mosaic covenant, Edom should've been compassionate. Babylon was a savage nation. Some suffered through no fault of their own. I'm talking about the faithful remnant in Judah who repented of their sins, trusted the LORD, and feared the LORD. God's people were not exempt.

There's a special obligation to care for blood relatives. In the context of caring for widows, Paul said this:

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. – 1 Tim 5:8

There's also the priority of spiritual family.

Priority of spiritual family

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." ³³ And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." – Mark 3:31-35

Jesus said his true family were those who followed him. In the context of restoring those in sin, bearing burdens in general, and ensuring that those who are taught are compensated, Paul says this:

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. – Gal 6:10

What am I getting at? There's a special obligation to care for our spiritual family, our brothers and sisters in Christ. And going back to Obadiah, one of the times we do this is when our brothers and sisters are sinned against. Edom acted one way. We act the opposite:

- 1) When our brothers and sisters are sinned against, we don't stand aloof.
 - We get involved. We listen to them. We hear about their plight.
- 2) When others rejoice over the suffering of our brothers and sisters, we don't rejoice with them.
 - We're angered. We're grieved. We're moved by their suffering = empathy.
- 3) When others take from our brothers and sisters, we don't join them.
 - When our brothers and sisters are "looted", we meet their needs.
- 4) When others hand our brothers and sisters over to those who wish to destroy them, we don't join in.
 - We offer sanctuary. A safe place. Refuge, protection from the suffering the world inflicts on them.

Edom = how not to respond to sufferers.

Examples

Stories of physical abuse = listen and don't offer trite responses. Empathize. Acknowledge their pain. Point to hope in Christ.

Sorrow over an unbelieving child = listen, pray, encourage, counsel.

Point 2: Be confident in the gospel (15-21)

Explanation

"For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations" (1:15). Why should Edom repent of sins committed against Judah? Because there's a day of judgment coming. "As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head" (1:15). There's no sin ever committed that God doesn't see. There's no sin ever committed that God doesn't address. The sins perpetrated by particular Edomites against particular Jews will be repaid in measured form that day. Punishment fitting the crimes committed. Pain inflicted will result in pain suffered:

For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually; they shall drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been. – 1:16

1:17 marks the beginning of a contrast (“but”). Some are repaid for their sins (Edom). Others escape God’s wrath (believing Judah). 1:17-21 will be true the believing remnant.

- 1) Escape from judgment on the day of the LORD.
 - 2) There’s holiness
- A world without sin.
- 3) There’s possession
- No more exile. No more foreign threats. Unhindered peace.
- 4) There’s reunion
- Jacob = Judah = southern kingdom = Judah and Benjamin.
 - Joseph = Israel = northern kingdom = the other 10 tribes.
 - believing Israel reunited as one.
- 5) There’s victory
- Jacob and Joseph will take part in the destruction of Esau.
- 6) Full possession of the promised land
- Mount Esau = south.
 - Philistines = west.
 - Ephraim and Samaria = north
 - Gilead = east.
 - exiles of the people of Israel = northern kingdom.
 - exiles of Jerusalem = southern kingdom.
 - No more foreign occupiers. Complete and permanent possession of the land.

What land?

"And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." – Gen 17:8

- Canaan was envisioned as an eternal possession, not just in this life.

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. – Gal 3:7-9

- Gentile believers = sons of Abraham who receive the blessings promised to Abraham.

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is

no transgression. ¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring- not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, – Rom 4:13-16

- Paul extends Canaan to mean the world. Earthly Canaan foreshadowed an eternal promised land.
- Being an heir of the world happens through faith, not those through the law (Jews).

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. – Heb 11:16

- They = the OT saints who believed God's promises.
- They desired a heavenly country = eternal land. God has prepared a heavenly city = the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2).

What I'm saying is the land promised in Obadiah 1:19-21 = the new heavens and new earth, the new Jerusalem, the whole world. The New Testament clarifies how the Old Testament promises are fulfilled.

7) The kingdom has come

- God dwelling among his people forever and ever.

To non-Christians

The gospel is a message of victory. God restoring his broken creation. Righting the wrongs of human history. The foundation of the gospel is something Christians call substitutionary atonement. The finished work of Christ.

God is holy → we rebel and incur guilt → our sins need to be punished

Against this backdrop Jesus comes into our world, taking on human flesh, lives a sinless life, and dies for sinners.

If you humble yourself, if you repent of your sins, if you place your trust in Jesus, not yourself, the merciful God extends forgiveness and you find yourself an heir of the promises in Obadiah. You'll reign with God forevermore.

And God doesn't leave us alone. He gives us the local church, brothers and sisters in Christ, to help us grow in our faith.

Conclusion

What we have here in Obadiah is gospel hope. Hope of rescue from our persecutors. Hope our persecutors will be punished. Hope of a permanent dwelling where God will be present, death will cease, suffering will cease. No more suffering because of sins inflicted on us. No more suffering because of our own choices. No more physical effects of the fall. God wins! We reign with him. This is the gospel hope!

What does God wins mean for us? Confidence. Confidence that God wins in the end = God's people win in the end. The picture here is victory. The picture here is rescue. The picture here is certainty. *"Thus says the Lord God."*

Persecution exists today. One day it won't. Mistreatment exists today. One day it won't. Suffering exists today. One day it won't. Why do I say **Be confident in the gospel?** We have a sure word from the Creator and Ruler of the universe. God wins!

We have every reason to be confident. A God who rules over the nations, sending Babylon to punish Judah for breaking the Mosaic covenant, sending Babylon to punish Edom for gloating over Judah's suffering, sending Cyrus to overthrow Babylon, stirring Cyrus to grant Judah a return to the land. A Savior who vindicated his claims by raising from the dead. A Savior's claims vindicated by the mustard seed becoming local churches throughout the globe. A Savior's claims vindicated by radically transformed sinners.

The world doesn't have reason for confidence. Confidence in man's changing perception and values. No word from the Creator = no certainty our intuitions are correct. Open to delusion. Like confidence in man's goodness and ability to reform himself. A world where we can build a space shuttle (complex and due to God-given intelligence) but can't eliminate violence, racism, fraud, hatred, etc. No new birth from the Creator = continued enslavement to sin. Broken individuals. Broken cultures.

Why do we, who have every reason for confidence, let those who have no foundation, basis, ground for their confidence intimidate us to have little confidence?

Consider the certain victory. God wins! Joyfully live for God in the strength he provides. Joyfully center your homes on God's Word. Joyfully live out your faith in this community. Joyfully share the reason for your hope in this community. With your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers. Not because you're ashamed or have guilt that you don't share your faith. Rather, because you have confidence in God and his gospel. In his victory. And **love your brothers and sisters** as you engage your world with gospel confidence.