

OBADIAH

Pride, Security and Deceit

Lesson 2

Obadiah 2-4

I. INTRODUCTION

A. God hates pride. He hates pride as much or more than He hates sexual immorality, lying, divorce or murder. Proverbs 6:19 says, ***“The LORD hates haughty eyes”***; that is, a spirit which says, “I’m superior to someone because I’m an important person” or “I deserve better because I’m superior to the person who is treating me badly or has more material prosperity than me.”

B. The scripture is clear, ***“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”*** (James 4:6b). The Sovereign God of the universe despises pride and He works to crush it in His own meaningful way. This is why we are commanded in James 4:10: ***“Humble yourselves before the LORD, and he will lift you up.”*** Pride must be recognized by the Christian and dealt with or God will take drastic measures to humble him by His living discipline.

C. The lesson of Obadiah is that God hates pride, and He judges men for their pride in His own meaningful way. Edom was an extremely small nation (110 miles long and 30 miles wide) but it was extraordinarily proud. Edom was proud of its position, for it was situated in mountainous country and very well protected from its enemies. It was a powerful country because it had a well trained army and influence over its neighbors; therefore, it was proud of its power. Remember, God hates pride and He deals with it in His own meaningful way.

II. GOD’S PREDICTION 2

A. ***See, I will make you small among the nations;***

1. This is the prediction of God through Obadiah’s prophecy of what will happen to Edom. This is a prophecy which has not occurred yet, but it is just as if it has already happened. While Edom is planning its strategy to overthrow Jerusalem, God has made His plan and Edom will fall. The Lord is sure of the success of His plan for Edom.

2. Edom was already small in size but this is a prophecy of contempt. Edom will be humiliated. It’s self-exaltation will be met with self-abasement.

B. You will be utterly despised. -- Edom wanted desperately to have recognition among the nations, but God said they would be despised. When God got

through with this proud, little country, the nations around them would hold them in contempt. Edom regarded itself as superior to all nations, especially Israel, but God was about to make this cocky nation insignificant. Why? God hates pride.

III. EDOM'S PRIDE (3a): *The pride of your heart has deceived you,*

A. Edom's basic problem was that of pride. The nation felt it was superior to all other nations. Edom boasted of its geographical location and military advantage over even the super-powers of its day. There were three major cities in Edom. Bozrah in the north which set on a hill and the only way up to the city was through a crevice which was highly protected. Bozrah could be conquered but not without great cost. Teman was in the south and it too was heavily fortified and could be conquered. But the capital city was Petra (Selah) which was, in the ancient world, the most fortified city. It was believed to be unconquerable by the Edomites and by their enemies. If the Edomites should somehow lose Bozrah and Teman, they would flee to Petra which means "rock" and there was no invading army who could conquer them.

B. Edom was deceived because they really believed they were unconquerable. They were trusting in their strategic location, military strength and their false gods of "Edom" and "Esau" to protect them. Their religion was expressed through their temple. These Edomites had set up a false, substitute, rival religion to the true religion of Jehovah-God because Esau, the founder of the Edomite nation, left his father Isaac, married foreign, unbelieving women who were idolaters, and set up false gods to show his superiority to Jacob, his blood brother, who stole Esau's birthright. Esau went so far as to make himself a god to show his superiority to the God of Israel.

C. We know from Jeremiah 17:9: *"the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* Edom was guilty of the pride of heart and they were so proud they could not see their own pride. Pride of heart always deceives us. Pride causes us to trust in self, or might, or position, or power rather than in the Living God. Remember, God hates pride and he says in Isaiah 45:2: *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another ..."* Pride robs God of glory and He will share His glory with no man because He is God. Pride says, "I should get glory as a man for the things I do," but humility says, "God should get the glory for everything because He does all things by His omnipotent power." Remember, God hates pride!

D. How well this is illustrated by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel four. The King had conquered the then known important world. He had built the magnificent city of Babylon and had a voluptuous palace equal to none in the world. He looked over his kingdom and welled up with pride, so much so that he thought of himself as a god and refused to bow to anyone in the universe. When he was at home in the palace, contented, prosperous and full of pride, he had a dream. He called for the best magicians in the nation to interpret the dream but none could do it. Finally, Daniel the prophet was called to interpret the dream. Daniel told the King he would go mad for seven years by the power of Jehovah-God and eat grass like a wild animal. He was to be

stricken with madness until ***“he acknowledged that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.”*** His kingdom was to be given back when ***“he acknowledged that Heaven rules.”*** After that, Nebuchadnezzar would have a prosperous rule, but only after he humbled himself and acknowledged unreservedly that Jehovah-God is King of the universe (cf. Dan. 4:34-37). ***Daniel 4:34-37: Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.***

At the end of that time, I Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”

At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became ever greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

IV. EDOM’S PROTECTION (3b): ***You who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights,***

A. Edom felt very secure in the mountainous country and in the ultimate fortress of Petra. They felt nothing could ever harm them, conquer them or destroy them. Why?

B. Petra was the ideal stronghold circled by mountains of over 5,000 feet above sea level. It was a flat-topped rock and made a perfect fortress. There were only two ways into Petra and neither was advantageous for an invading army. One route was brutally tortuous and the other was suicidal in exposing the ranks to the warriors of Edom.

C. One approach was through the Wady Musa from the southeast. This was a very rough, twisting strip of rock-strewn pathway through the mountains and around frightening cliffs where Edomite warriors would be waiting in ambush. This way was almost impossible for man to traverse. The steep crags, tropical heat, scarcity of water, and the threat to troop morale combined to argue against this path. Besides there were little fortresses all along this route, and while the invaders would plod their way up the mountains, the Edomites enjoyed the coolness of the caves with adequate water supply. Any foreign army would be foolish to attack Petra from the Wady Musa.

D. The other way to penetrate the city of Petra would be to come from the east. To do so, the invading army would have to pass through a deep gorge which was over a mile in length and only ten to thirty feet wide. At some points, the sheer walls of the gorge rose 200 feet high, and at other places the massive jaws of the crevice almost closed so that it was difficult for two horsemen to ride abreast. This was a virtual death-trap for the enemy. Edomite soldiers, lurking atop the rock walls, would suddenly launch an attack, putting the invading ranks in to a cold grip of panic. Huge rocks would be dropped on the invaders and crush them. Even if the enemy somehow got inside the area of Petra, they would still have to face an Edomite army of great strength, skill and courage. If the enemy somehow took the fortress, the Edomites would retreat to the caves which were often connected by elaborate tunnels and fight the invaders hand to hand. The result was that a very small army of Edomites could hold off and defeat any superpower army.

E. Anyone of that day who knew of Petra would have laughed in Obadiah's face when he said Edom would be destroyed. Edom's swollen pride lulled it into the deceit of false confidence. It's security was vested solely in the lifeless protection of awesome walls of rock, not the Rock of Ages, the eternal God (Deut. 33:27). ***Deuteronomy 33:27: The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.***

F. Edom trusted in their position and their power. The result was they became proud, arrogant and cocky. Even today men trust in their position. They really believe that education, a certain profession such as a politician, doctor, lawyer, preacher or president of a company makes them superior to those who have less education or fortune. There are those who are driven to get a PhD so they can give the air of being better and wield authority and power over others. There are those today who have a carnal security in stocks and bonds, who have built a great fortress of financial security and sense they are just a little bit better than others. The pride of position can be devastating to men because it produces a carnal and false security which can be removed overnight. As even the unbelieving ancients used to say, "Whom mornings dawn beholdeth proud, the setting sun beholdeth bowed." Remember, God hates pride! NOTE. God does not care what position we hold, even if it is a high ranking position as long as that position is not used to make ourselves superior to others or cause us to abuse power to make others feel inferior. What God wants man to understand is that all of his position and power in life are given to him by God and he is to give God all the glory (1 Cor. 4:7). ***1 Corinthians 4:7: For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?***

V. EDOM'S PROVOCATION (3c-4):

A. ***"You say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?'"*** -- With such a city as Petra, Edom swaggered in its confidence, boasted of its unconquerable fortress, flexed its muscles in proud defiance and gloated with swelling

words, “Who shall bring me down to the ground?” Edom was full of pride but more revealing it had contempt for Jehovah-God. Edom challenged God and God picked up the challenge. It is a serious matter to get too big for our britches and bring provocation against God.

B. ***“Though you soar like an eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,’ declares the LORD.”***

1. The Edomites’ defiant challenge, hurled out recklessly, is taken up immediately by the Lord Himself. Though they lived high in the mountains like eagles, God would destroy them. He would swoop down on them like an eagle when they thought they were as safe as eagles (Jer. 49:22). Even though they lived so high in the mountains it seemed as though they could touch the stars, God would destroy them. Edomites could escape and dodge all efforts of man to conquer them, they could not stop an omnipotent, sovereign God who does the humanly impossible. God would bring down the proud, arrogant, haughty and pompous Edomites.

2. The Edomites did not know a very important characteristic of God -- He is the omnipotent, all-powerful God, and it is impossible to escape His judgment. Furthermore, He is an omni-present God; that is, He is everywhere present and we cannot escape Him if we soar like eagles or make our nest in the stars. NOTE. How foolish it is for men to say, “I will run away from God and build my own kingdom. I will become great in position and powerful in influence and God will not be able to touch me.” If man becomes famous in position and powerful in influence, filled with pride and arrogance, God will bring him down in His own meaningful way.

3. We certainly learn from this verse that if man chooses to challenge Omnipotence, that challenge will be taken up and God will bring him down. Why? God hates pride! ILLUSTRATION: Smith Mountain Lake.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a pastor in Roanoke, VA, a very strange incident was printed up on the front page of the newspaper. Four college students were out water skiing on Smith Mountain Lake. One of the girls was a professing Christian and was dating one of the guys who was not a Christian and a professed atheist. The girl was always witnessing to him about his need of Christ. A severe storm came up in the lake and there was terrible lightning. The Christian girl cried out, “God will protect us!” The young man jumped up on the deck of the boat and defiantly said, “There is no God! If there is a God, let him strike me dead right now!” At that very moment, he was hit by a lightning bolt and immediately killed. An accident? I think not. We don’t challenge God and get away with it.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. We can easily see that God hates the pride of the heart. The best illustration I know of is the story of a preacher. This man had a growing, dynamic church which was making an impact for Christ in his city and the world. The church had grown

from 50 people to over 400 in attendance. People were being saved. Saints were being built. Men and women were going into the ministry and onto the mission field from his church.

B. After a number of years, the preacher grew restless and discontent. He began to say to himself and to others that he should have a wider ministry and that he deserved a larger and bigger church. He looked over his kingdom and said, "What is a great preacher like me doing in a small place like this?" He had an over inflated opinion of himself and his own importance.

C. Then one day God struck this preacher with a terrible case of depression, so severe that death seemed better than life. There was, however, a divine design behind this depression. At the lowest point of this depression, after weeping and praying for hours, a voice come to the mind of this preacher. The voice said, "Because of your pride, you shall eat grass like Nebuchadnezzar for seven years and then you shall be blessed in your ministry."

D. This man's depression lasted for months and hung on for years. He left his pastorate of many years and for the next five years had various pastorates in other cities. While there was faithful ministry, there seemed to be no power, no blessing, no anointing of the Spirit on his ministry.

E. Almost seven years to the day since he fell into depression, he finally came to Orlando, Florida to pastor. And from that time to right now God has restored his ministry just like He promised to do. Yes, that man is Jack Arnold. God broke me so I would be ready to take a small church like Howell Branch Fellowship and be happy to minister to it.

F. What has God taught me? He hates pride! He will share His glory with no man! He does as He pleases with His servants! His loving care and discipline are valuable to the spiritual growth of His people. I learned what Nebuchadnezzar learned, ***"I will praise and exalt and glorify the King of Heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble."***