

Obadiah 15-21

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[0:00] We today are finishing our two-part series in the book of Obadiah. So if you have a Bible, I'd invite you to follow along if you can find it.

It's an Old Testament, it's a sliver of a book, the smallest book of the Old Testament, in fact, just 21 short verses. It's toward the very back end, I think it's 918 or so in the Pew Bibles, the big ESVs. And last week, just to kind of refresh for anybody who may not have been here last week, we heard this oracle of the Lord against Edom, pronouncing judgment and ruin upon this brother of the people of Israel who had both cheered, profited, and contributed to Israel's own destruction of judgment from God.

So it was a heavy week last week and it was warm in here and if you're here today, there's good news that though it's still hot, this is the upswing of the book of Obadiah and there is really, really sweet news for us to benefit from together today.

So maybe you've heard some of these types of statements, maybe you've uttered them yourself in the midst of difficult circumstances, things like, well, think positively or nothing's ever really as bad as it seems.

[1:34] Think on the bright side. Or one of my favorites, everything will work out in the end. We know that even our best efforts to cheer others up who are in the midst of hard situations and we know that when people have tried to cheer us up when we've been in the middle of hard situations, these kind of statements can leave this hollow feeling.

We know like, well, it's the best I can offer and yet it doesn't really satisfy. People are in misery and suffering and this just seems like something kind of nice to soothe them for a moment, but it's not lasting.

Imagine the people of Israel who have just been exiled, seen Jerusalem, walls torn down, their own temple of worship burned to the ground and now they're in exile in a foreign land with a foreign king being tasked with worshipping foreign gods.

Imagine if we just came up to these Israelites and said, well, just don't worry, be happy. How unsatisfying that word would be. And in fact, proves kind of unkind, doesn't it?

Because it ignores the realities of the situations that Israel is going through and that we ourselves know so well, a situation in which hope seems nowhere to be found.

[3:05] Where can we find any lasting comfort in the midst of such a perplexing world? In the midst of suffering and difficulty, when God seems silent, distant, or even the cause of our pain and suffering, where is hope?

Well, we learn from Obadiah that God has an answer to these questions. And his answer is, hope is found with me.

So let's read Obadiah, starting in verse 15 and going to the end. Don't, try not to get too caught up in all these place names and these confusing people and places and locations.

We'll kind of explain the purpose of those things. But listen for the one speaking and the promises to his people and just how he's bringing all of this together in spite of a situation that appears hopeless.

This is God's word to us today, friends. For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you.

[4:21] Your deeds shall return on your own head. For as you have drunk on my holy mountains, so all the nations shall drink continually.

They shall drink and swallow and shall be as though they had never been. But in Mount Zion, there shall be those who escape and it shall be called holy.

And the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame and the house of Esau stubble.

They shall burn them and consume them and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau. For the Lord has spoken. Those of the Negev shall possess Mount Esau and those of the Shephelah shall possess the land of the Philistines.

They shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. The exiles of this host of the people of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as the Zarephath.

[5:24] And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the Negev. Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

Friends, God's message to us today is very simple.

In fact, we can summarize it in about five or six words. Hope in your sovereign king. Hope in your sovereign king.

We're going to walk through this passage today looking at three truths about who God is that confirm and support this call for us, God's people, to hope in the Lord.

So three truths. First truth is this, that our God is perfectly just. We see this in verses 15 and 16. If we remember that Edom's day serves as this signpost.

[6:42] The judgment that God said was near for the people of Edom is actually this sort of beacon and warning to all the nations because in verse 15, we see that the day of the Lord is near upon not just Edom, but all nations.

Beyond a warning, this statement is also reinforcing hope for God's people. Our God is just, the prophet tells us. We see in verse 15 that as you have done, it shall be done to you.

This eye for an eye retribution principle that governs the universe. not because karma is this thing that exists and what goes around comes around, but because the God of this universe is a just God.

He will render judgment upon all people for what we have done. This is such good news to a bunch of exiles who are carted off from Israel, who would experience God's righteous anger at their own sin and rebellion and idolatry, and then, on top of that, been humiliated by their brother Edom from their high place mocking and laughing and looting the cities of rubble.

And God sees it all. And it's promised that the guilty will not go unpunished. In verse 16, we see that there's this interesting shift that happens here.

[8:15] So far, every time the word you has been used, Obadiah has been speaking directly to Edom, the you is singular, and he's been talking, you, Edom, this is going to happen.

You've done this. I'm going to do this to you, et cetera. But here in verse 16, the you becomes you all, all of you. And I think Obadiah peels back the curtain a little bit, and he's speaking now to the exiled people of God who are in a situation that is completely hopeless.

And he says, just as you've drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations will surely drink. So he speaks this message.

You know my judgment, and you know how harsh and extreme it can be, and yet there is hope because I'm not done with you, and I'm not done with the nations who have become your enemies and harmed you.

God says, surely I will bring judgment upon the nations. None of your enemies, including Edom, will miss out on this cup of retribution. See what he's doing?

[9:22] Israel still had hope because the Lord was still in charge of the situation. Justice was still his to bring. It's still good news for us today.

God is just today and always forever. Now, of course, we know this, right? We know that God is just. We say this to ourselves and to each other.

But if we're honest too, right, we can tend to live sort of untethered from this reality, sort of in our heads going, yes, God is just, but then with our lives we can say, maybe he's not.

Maybe I need to kind of take action into my own hands. So to help us, let's run a little diagnostic and show that while we might be prone to retaliate and demand immediate response of payment for wrongs done, while we may hold grudges, we might try and self-justify, kind of minimizing our own sin and over-inflating other sin.

Let's run this diagnostic asking the question, am I living in the good of the truth that God is just? Am I living in the goodness of the truth that God is just?

[10:41] Just three principles to keep in mind, to live in the good of this reality this morning and always. first, we're to value all people the same because they're God's image bearers.

We're prone to favoritism, which is unjust. James chapter 2 tells us of this example where two guys come into a house of worship and one guy has gold rings and he's got really fine clothing and has the latest Calvin Klein cologne on and he walks in and another guy comes in with tattered clothing and barely any shoes on his feet and maybe he smells bad because he hasn't had a chance to shower recently.

And James points out how the people treated one man as royalty and brought him to a seat of honor and the other man said, well, can you get down here on the floor and I'd actually like to put my feet on top of you for my own comfort.

James says, we're not to show that kind of partiality. We're not to be unjust like that because our God is a God of justice who values all human life the same.

So likewise, we look to affirm and uphold the dignity and worth of all people. Second, diagnostic, see if we're living in the goodness of the truth that God is just.

[12:07] So we love our enemies. We pray for those who persecute us. We don't go around retaliating and sort of enacting our own retribution for wrongs committed against us.

We love and we bless and we pray for those who persecute us. First Peter unpacks this so well for us in chapter 3, verse 9, he writes, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling.

but on the contrary, bless for to this you were called. In his reasoning, he goes on to kind of lay out is that both those who initiate the reviling, who begin the injustice and those who retaliate against that injustice, that's evil on both sides.

So whether you're perpetrating it or you're being the victim initially and then lashing out in response, it's evil. He says, so don't do that, bless.

Your holy nation, bless, always, regardless. And he says, ultimately, because God is just and God will bring judgment upon evil.

[13:28] Instead, be like Jesus who in chapter 2 of 1 Peter, Peter says, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return. He didn't retaliate. He continued entrusting himself to the one who judges justly.

So we love our enemies, living in the good of God being so just. And 3, we are quick to forgive those who sin against us.

we know that as recipients of the grace of God and the forgiveness that only God can provide, that no person could ever wrong us anywhere near the degree that we have wronged and offended our God.

So we long for even the worst of our enemies to experience the grace and forgiveness of a loving father. we forgive so that we can shine his light and to show how grateful we are for the mercy that God has extended to us.

From Jesus' lips himself, we realize that it is unjust to have received the grace of God for ourselves and then to demand justice from our brothers when they wrong us.

[14:52] Give what has been given. We've been given mercy so we give mercy freely without reservation. That's to live in the goodness of the reality that God is just.

God will repay all people for what they have done. So God, let God, church, let God bring justice. He is just and he's faithful.

Our reason to hope in our sovereign king this morning just keeps getting more clear now as we move back into the text and we start looking again at this second reason to hope in your sovereign king this morning.

It's because God keeps his promises. God keeps his promises. We've already seen this promise that the day of Edom was near and that all the nations will be judged according to their deeds but now in verse 17 it turns and we see this word but in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape. we have a God who has told us in 2 Timothy 2.13 that even if we are faithless he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.

[16:11] It's a God who in Proverbs 30 verse 5 reveals that every word of God proves true. He is a shield to everyone who takes refuge in him.

We know and worship and love a God who keeps his promises. So when we see promise after promise after promise in Obadiah our hearts should be filled with hope.

Verse 17 the phrase translated those who escape should really be seen as deliverance. It's not talking about group of people it's talking about delivering but in Mount Zion there shall be deliverance and the mountain shall be holy.

There's the first promise here we see that deliverance is coming in the very place that God established for his people to dwell with him forever. It's in rubble and yet he still makes this promise and we hear the whisper of covenant.

covenant. We move on and we see at the end of verse 17 that the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions. It's talking promised land the land promised to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the land of Canaan in this case God promises that they're going to retake what was lost to them after the backside of this judgment that they received.

[17:47] And we hear the sound of covenant again. Verse 18 there's this promise of triumph and victory over all of the enemies of God and his people.

The house of Jacob shall be a fire, the house of Joseph a flame, Esau will be stubble. It'll be the chaff that only serves to expand the flame.

God's people will be the fire, and their enemies will be burned up and destroyed. The Lord has spoken, we see at the end of 18.

It's certain. God promises that his people will be victorious over all of their enemies. Covenant again.

now we return in verses 19 and 20 to this idea of possession and taking possession of all this different territory. And here's where we get all these names that most of us probably have barely ever heard of.

[18:55] Some of which aren't even known locations. We don't even know where the likes of the Sephirad is. people are going to see. But what the prophet is doing here is sort of drawing this compass.

In 19, he starts with the Negev, which is in the southern part of Judah, and then he goes east, north, west, full circle. You draw a compass and you hit all the four starred points on it, north, south, east, west, and you will see that each one of the directions of the compass will be occupied by God's people again.

Verse 20, it's similar, but instead of the four points, it's the tippity-top recesses of Israel to the very, very bottom reaches of Judah. Again, the exiles of the host of the people of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Arafat, as north as God ever promised his people, and likewise in the south to those exiles of Jerusalem.

God's people are going to retake possession of what God had promised to them. Now God's kind of talking crazy, isn't he?

I mean, north, south, east, west, God, from the far north to the far south, the fullness of restoration to a group of people carted off to a foreign land?

[20:24] It seems crazy. not to mention, we see that now he's even bringing the northern tribes of Israel back into the equation.

That people who, when the Assyrians came in at 722 and exiled all the ten tribes, and then they drop out of the radar of our Bibles. In verse 20, it says the exiles of those people, of the people of Israel.

Israel will repossess land. So God has to do this huge work to orchestrate this kind of promise keeping. But he keeps his promises.

He's had this great track record, right, throughout the history of the Bible to Israel, to all the nations. And there's no Assyrians or Babylonians or even stiff-necked Israelites or any amount of

wrongdoing that's going to prevent our God from following through for his people and keeping all of his promises.

We see shortly after Obadiah was written, year 553 BC, Edom is besieged and ceases to be a nation. Then just 15 years later, we see it recorded in the book of Ezra, chapter 1, King Cyrus, this foreign king, allows the Jews to return home and to start rebuilding their temple, to re-fortify their cities.

[22:00] And we see God meant what he said. He keeps his promises. We rejoice today, too, because if he kept his promises beyond the destruction of Israel, beyond the exile of his people, he did so so that Christ would be born, that Jesus would be born into a world through the line of Abraham, through the line of David to rescue humanity from the grip of sin.

So there is hope, real and lasting hope, because our God keeps his promises. promises. As people, we need to cling to this hope.

Not a wishful thinking kind of hope, not just this pleasantries that kind of tides us over, not this hollow sort of isn't really true hope, but real hope, because Jesus is alive.

So let me just encourage this morning that in light of the promises of God, that if you haven't done this already, that you start kind of making this mental Rolodex. Maybe you write them out on a three-by-five card, but you start writing out the promises of God, and you keep them near, because no doubt, there's coming times, and you've experienced them plenty already.

There's day after day after day when we need God's promises. We need to recall them to mind, so that we don't get discouraged, so that we don't lose hope in his promise and in his goodness.

[23:42] For example, is anybody feeling condemned and defeated by sin? Bring the promise of 1 John 1, 9 to mind, that he who is faithful and just, when we confess our sins, he will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Put that promise in your Rolodex. Maybe you're overwhelmed, and you don't know how to pray, and you remember the promises of Romans 8 that says, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, and when we don't know how to pray, he intercedes and prays for us.

Anybody need that promise? Maybe you're feeling alone for God. You pull out the promise from Hebrews chapter 13 verse 5 that says, behold, I will never leave you nor forsake you, and you say, that's my God.

He keeps his promises to me. Maybe you're questioning salvation, or you've questioned in the past, and you pull out the promise that says, everyone, everyone, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

And you say, amen. I never have to wonder. God is faithful. He keeps his promises, and that one's for me. Cling to his promises, church.

[24:59] Not in wishful thinking, but by faith, knowing that Jesus is alive and on the throne. And every promise of God is yes and amen in him.

Hope in your sovereign king, church, because he keeps his promises. Finally, as we move back to the text, we see a third truth about God. It stirs our hearts full of hope.

It's found in this verse 21, this kind of last phrase of Obadiah. It's his truth, that his kingdom is forever. His kingdom is forever.

It seems like all along, the prophet Obadiah has been speaking to his people, hey, appearances can be deceiving. Right? In the ancient Near Eastern culture, the strength of a nation's deity, their God, was seen in military victory and in prosperity and wealth.

And here God's speaking to Israel after they've been exiled. Saying, appearances can be deceiving. God ends this oracle saying, the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

[26:22] And again, he's not just talking crazy, but now he's got some explaining to do. It appears as though the Babylonian's deity is much stronger than Israel's.

That Yahweh has finally met his match and he's defeated and his people are undone. But it's not so, God says. Dominion and authority have never changed hands.

And they never will. Our God is in the heavens. He does all that he pleases. Psalm 115. Psalm 115.

So we know that whether God is speaking to exiles who have been recently conquered and shipped off to Babylon, or if he's speaking to the 21st century church being persecuted in every corner of the world, or speaking to you in your personal battle with disease or conflict, God's kingdom is forever. He is on the throne. And all of history is moving toward the day when we will see him. When appearances align with reality. We never have to wonder again.

[27:32] Every eye will see him on that day. The book of Obadiah begins, if you remember from last week, it begins with this, thus says the Lord God.

It begins with the one true living God who rules over all things as he wills. Who has no rival to his throne and will one day fully vindicate his name against all unrighteousness.

And the book ends the same way. The kingdom, the dominion, the rule, the authority, the power will be the Lord's. And in the middle of the book, you guessed it, it's the same.

Over and over and over again. In verse 2, Almighty God promises to bring this proud and arrogant nation of Edom down from his mountainous pride. Verse 7, Yahweh says, I'll turn Edom's allies into his enemies.

He won't know where it's coming from, but his armies will be dismayed and they will be crushed.

God says, surely on that day, in verses 8 and 9, I will cut off the nation of Edom.

[28:45] And he did. He did. Because his kingdom is forever and he will not, he will not abide any sort of enemies to that.

Verses 10 to 14, it just goes on and the Lord says, I know, Edom, I know all of your transgressions against your brother Israel. And he names them one after the other, after the other, after the other. It started in your heart and it just is displayed and even turning God's own people back toward their captors.

Rejoicing over their suffering. And so he says in verses 15 and 16 that justice is coming, not just upon Edom, but upon all the nations because God knows all things and is above all things and he alone is judge.

He then promises deliverance and restoration and victory and he means it. And he's able to do even far more abundantly than all that we ask or think because he's God and he has no equal.

So he says to Israel and he says to us today that appearances may be deceiving, friends, but God's word is always true. He is in control. His kingdom is forever.

[30:05] What appeared to be the end of the nation of Israel was actually God ensuring that his will would be done for Israel and for all the nations. Little less than 600 years after Obadiah wrote this oracle, our Jesus was born.

He was the son of Abraham, son of David. God promised over and over and over again that his Messiah would come. He would come from Judah in the line of King David.

He would sit on David's throne forever. He would be given dominion over all things. His name is Jesus. He is right now seated at the right hand of majesty on high.

He right now is upholding the universe by the word of his power. He has promised to come again to judge all people in all nations according to what they have done.

And when he comes, the victory that he brings, he will gather people from all the four compass directions, from the four corners of the world, he will gather his people to himself forever.

[31:22] Deliverance will come for the people of God. Jesus will bring it. Listen to Revelation 5 and this scene of worship after Jesus has come back.

And John writes this. Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

And the four living creatures said amen and the elders fell down and worshiped. Through and through in our Bibles we see that our God's kingdom is forever.

Should give us great hope in the midst of adversity and suffering and the perplexities of life. God's kingdom is forever and Jesus is king forever.

[32:59] Christ the king today, store this word in your heart. Abide in this goodness that we are to hope together in our sovereign king.

We are to hope in him because he is just, because he keeps his promises, and because his kingdom is forever.

Let's pray. Father, would you impart faith by your spirit that we might go away satisfied in Christ. Help us to hope in you despite appearances. Give us grace for everything we need. We worship and adore you, God.

Pray in Jesus' name. Amen.