

Brothers Divided

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Date: 26 January 2022

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[0 : 00] Let's pray, friends. Almighty God and loving Father, may the words that I speak now be your words. May you graft them into our hearts and work in us so as to bring forth in us the fruit of good works.

And we pray this for the honour and praise of your name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Friends, the world that we live in is a world that prizes tolerance as one of the greatest virtues. We lord tolerance. We promote tolerance. Why, even sometimes we cannot tolerate those who are intolerant. And those who prize tolerance are often low with hatred.

You see, hatred in many parts of the contemporary world is viewed as a very, very, very negative emotion. And those of us who have been hated, those who have hated someone else, know just how negative hatred can be.

To hate something is to regard that thing as evil. It is to have a very intense dislike for something. The word hatred, therefore, is often associated with words such as enmity, animosity, malevolence, rancour, malignity, detestation, loathing, abhorrence, repugnance, antipathy, and intolerance.

[1 : 25] And we who live in the contemporary world know how hatred can destroy relationships, don't we? As a result, we find it hard to say anything positive about hatred.

Hatred is something to be shunned, something to protect people from, something we want to abolish from our lives and our society. In other words, we almost view tolerance as something evil. There is certainly little that is positive about it, or intolerance as something evil. And that makes the Bible seem very strange at times. You see, the Bible sometimes talks about hatred and intolerance in a positive sense.

In fact, the Bible sometimes talks about God hating people and things. Let me give you some examples. Isaiah chapter 6 verse 18, or verse 8, God tells us that he hates robbery and iniquity. Psalm 5 verse 5, we're told that God hates evildoers. In Proverbs 6 verses 16 to 18, we're given a long list of things that God hates.

[2 : 37] Listen to the writer list them off. There are six things the Lord hates. Seven, that I have detestable to him. Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil.

See, the Bible is clear. Hatred is something that is powerful and destructive. Nevertheless, there can even be a good hatred, a positive hatred. Positive hatred can be seen in God's disgust of sin and sinners.

Positive hatred can be seen in God's intolerance of evil. Evil makes God angry. In other words, he hates it. So that's my way of introducing our subject for tonight.

I want to tell you that the Bible talks about a particular sin that God finds particularly offensive. And that sin is named. In Proverbs chapter 8 verse 13.

Do you know what it is? It is pride. Listen to what God says. In his word, in the second half of Proverbs chapter 13, he says, Proverbs verse 13, chapter 8 verse 13, He says, I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech.

[4 : 00] And the rest of the Bible agrees. You see, pride is the sin that in some way kicks off sin in the Garden of Eden. Pride is the sin that Adam and Eve were guilty of when they thought they knew better than God.

Pride is the sin that is said to characterize the devil. And pride is the main sin of some of the greatest sinners in the Bible. God hates the sin of pride.

He hates the arrogant. And our passage today is all about it. It concentrates on pride. So let's take a look at it. Let's turn to this very short and largely unread book of the Old Testament.

I hope some of you have had the joy of reading it this week. Let's turn to it. Let's look at the book of Obadiah. Now, I've already introduced you to God and one of his hatreds. But really, to understand, Obadiah, I need to introduce you to two other people.

I need to introduce you to two brothers. And I need to tell you a bit about the history of their relationships together. So travel back with me into the book of Genesis. And in Genesis 25, Abraham and Sarah's daughter-in-law is pregnant.

[5 : 10] She is pregnant with twins. And those twins are fighting in her womb. The word of the Lord to Rebekah says that the older will serve the younger.

Anyway, the twins are born. And you remember it. The oldest is called Esau. Later he will be known as Edom, which means red.

I presume he's a redhead, actually. But anyway, there we go. Second child is born grasping the heel of Esau. He is called Jacob, which understandably means he who grasps the heel.

As they grow up, Esau becomes a hunter and is favoured by dad. That is Isaac. However, Jacob is a quiet man. He stays around the home. And guess who he's favoured by?

Mum. Come, Rebekah. Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for a pittance. For a pot of red lentil stew. I mean, that's a lot to lose to red lentil stew, isn't it?

[6 : 14] Then Jacob and Rebekah deceive Isaac into giving his deathbed blessing to Jacob instead of Esau. And the end result is that Jacob has to flee Esau's anger.

And now eventually there's some partial reconciliation between those two sons. However, the two nations that come from the two sons live in perpetual rivalry with each other.

That which was in the flesh of their grand, grand, grand, grand, grandparents continues in their blood as well. So when Israel escapes from slavery in Egypt, the nation of Edom refuses to let Israel pass through their land.

And the tensions continue on both sides. Throughout the reigns of the kings of Israel, there are attacks from both sides against each other. And just as the brothers couldn't get on, so the nations that follow them could not get on either.

There's an occasional alliance, an occasional joint effort, but largely these two nations fight. They quarrel. They mistreat each other.

[7 : 19] However, in the history of the relationshipless nations, there's one act that for the Edomites stands out. It is the last days of Israel's kingship. The Babylonians are besieging Jerusalem.

The Edomites rejoice that those Israel people are getting what's coming. Getting conquered. And Ezekiel says they take revenge on Israel in Ezekiel 25.

Psalms 137 says that they cried over Israel and urged for Jerusalem to be destroyed. Then after it was flattened, after the fall of Jerusalem, the Edomites took advantage of Israel's absence.

They settled into the heart of the southern part of Judah. So there it is. The background of two brothers. And the history of relationships between them. Now, now that we know that history, we'll be able to understand this little book of Obadiah.

Because you have to know that history to understand this book. For here we hear God's assessment of Edom. Look at our opening verse.

[8 : 28] It is in the form of a vision of Obadiah and it concerns Edom and it's a message from the Lord. His messenger, his envoy has been sent to the nations with a message. And it's there in the last line of verse 1.

Can you see it there? These are the words of the envoy of the Lord. God is clearly opposed to Edom.

But what are God's charges? What is the nature of Edom's sin? Well, look at verse 3. One singular sin is focused on. And that sin is the sin of pride.

God says, The pride of your heart has deceived you. You who live in the cliffs of the rocks. And make your home on the heights.

You who say to yourself, Who can bring me down to the ground? But let's dig a little bit deeper. Let's see if we can isolate the sources of pride and see how God will act against them.

[9 : 26] Look at verses 3 and 4. The focus, These verses focus on the location of Edom. And it's spoken of as a high and exalted place. Secure location. The Edomites live in the cliffs of the rocks.

Verse 2. They've made their home on the heights. Verse 2. They say to themselves, Who can bring me down to the ground? That's the first source of pride here.

Their physically high and secure location. And it indeed was grand. And for its day, Impenetrable. Their main base was a situation on a low, narrow ridge southeast of the Dead Sea. In places that ridge was over 4,000 meters a feet high in the north. It rose to 5,700 feet in the south. These were inaccessible gorges on either side.

And all of that was supplemented by a series of fortresses that had been built. It was very impressive. But, God is far from impressed.

[10:39] Throughout the prophet in verse 4, Or through the prophet in verse 4, He declares this Edom, That they take pride in, Like this.

Though you soar like the eagle, And make your nest among the stars. From there, I will bring you down, Declares the Lord.

And verses 5 and 6 explain. Edom's pride in location and security, That thing that they take pride in rather than their God, Or rather than in God, Will be shattered.

And verse 5 imagines that robbers come, But damage is minimised. Then they will only steal as much as they want. Or if grape pickers come, He says, Surely they'd leave greenings, A few remnant grapes.

But no, Edom might think they were okay. But verse 6 describes what happens, What will happen. God says to secure Edom, That is to Esau, The nation.

[11:35] But how Esau will be ransacked. His hidden treasures pillaged. Can you hear what God is saying to Edom? It's strong.

He's saying, Well may you glory in your grand location, Your security in the world, But God will debase your pride. But now I want you to look at verse 7.

Verse 7 hints, In another source of pride, And supposed security, Edom's allies and friends. And God promises them that their pride in such things will disappoint.

Look at what he says, Verse 7, All your allies will force you to the border. Your friends will deceive and overpower you. Those who eat your bread will set a trap for you.

But you won't detect it. Can you hear what God is saying again to Edom? Well may they glory in their friends, And their allies. But God will debase that pride.

[12:35] But God doesn't even let up at that point. He identifies another source of pride. Not just location. Not just friends and allies. But also wise men and warriors. God promises that they won't be able to assist them either.

Look at what he says, Verses 8 and 9. In that day declares the Lord, Will I not destroy the wise men of Edom? Those of understanding in the mountains of Esau. Your warriors, Your warriors, Timan, Will be terrified.

God will debase their pride. Or your warriors, Timan, Will be terrified. And everyone on Esau's mountains Will be cut down in the slaughter. Can you hear this message of Edom?

Or to Edom from God? It is powerful, isn't it? It's potent. He's putting things very clearly to this people. Well may they glory in such things.

Well may they glory in wise men and armies. But God will debase that pride. And he will do so thoroughly and fully. Sisters and brothers in Christ.

[13:41] The Bible is very clear. Pride is a very common, but very risky human syndrome. Pride was present.

In the Garden of Eden. It characterizes humans who think they know the best. But it can be expressed in a whole host of ways, Can't it? But most commonly, Most commonly it is expressed in us thinking we know better than God.

That is the worst pride you can have. To say you know better than your creator. But God's promise is sure. And I want to read to you from Proverbs chapter 16, Verses 18 to 19.

It says this, You'll remember these verses. Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before the fall.

Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed, Than to share plunder with the proud. Brothers and sisters in Christ. In this passage we see that human pride is particularly offensive to God.

[14:48] It is particularly offensive to God, Because it ends up defying his advice about how to live best in this world. Pride can express itself in a multitude of different ways. As we humans have found many, As we humans have found many, many ways to do it, Have assuredly the ultimate expression of prizes when a person resists God's word about his son.

God's actions in his son are designed to save us humans. They are designed for our good.

But when we resist God's word about his son, We choose to resist God's only way of salvation. And if we do this, Our destruction will be much worse than that of Edom's. If we resist his word about his son, We resist God's ultimate good for us.

Not only that, We give up the only shelter from his wrath at our pride and sin. So listen again to what God himself says. Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let's return to Obadiah verse 11. Let me give you some perspective on this passage. I want to read another passage to you. It comes from the book of Deuteronomy. I want you to just listen rather than look it up.

[16:04] Deuteronomy is, as you may know, A series of sermons given by Moses before Israel entered the promised land. It tells them how they're to act as God's people. Now remember, What I told you about how Edom treated Israel when they were journeying through the promised land?

They would not let Israel pass through their land. Israel would probably think they are right to have a grudge against Edom. But listen to what God says to his people through Moses in Deuteronomy 23 verse 7.

He says, Do not despise an Edomite. For the Edomites are related to you. Listen to Psalm 133. And hear how God thinks brothers should interact. He says, How good and pleasant it is. When God's people live together in unity.

It's like precious oil poured on the head. Running down the beard. That may not seem pleasant to you, But it apparently did to Israelites. Running down Aaron's beard.

[17:10] Down the collar of his robe. It's as if the dew of Mount Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing of life forevermore.

You see, if God expected Israel to live as brothers with Edom, Then you'd think that he'd expect Edom to live as brothers with Israel, wouldn't you? They should live in harmony with each other. That's how harmony pleases God. He likes it. But let's look at what Edom did. Look at verse 10. The book of Obadiah was probably written not long after the events of 586 BC, When Israel was invaded for a third time by Babylon, Babylon's king of Nebuchadnezzar.

He put up a siege against the city. He killed its inhabitants. He leveled the city. And then he carted the remaining people off to Babylon. And it appears to say Obadiah is speaking of those events here in verse 10.

And he gives some information about what the Edomites did. So imagine you're an Israelite. You've had this done by the Babylonians. And then your brothers do this. It's not pretty.

[18:21] In fact, it's an atrocious act by a brother. Let's just read it. Imagining you're an Israelite. Remembering the siege of Jerusalem. And this is what you remember. Because of the violence done against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame.

You will be destroyed forever. On the day you stood aloof, while strangers carried off his wealth, and foreigners entered his gates, and cast lots for Jerusalem.

And you were like one of them. You shouldn't gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction. Nor boast so much in the day of their trouble.

You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster. Nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster.

Nor seize their worth in the day of their disaster. You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble.

[19:28] Can you hear what they did? They tagged along with the Babylonians when the city walls of Jerusalem were breached and the gates opened.

And they gloated. They boasted. They rejoiced over the fall of their brothers. They plundered. And then they waited on the outside of the city and killed the fleeing Israelites.

Or they handed them over to the Babylonians. It was a despicable action. Totally reprehensible. And God promises judgment. Verses 1-9, He promised punishment for pride.

In 11-14, He promises punishment for inhumanity and lack of brotherly love. But listen to verse 10. God says, Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame.

You'll be destroyed forever. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let's just stand back for a moment and see if we can understand what's going on here.

[20:34] I want you to notice something. I want you to notice that God's criticism here is not about the nation of Edom and their relationship with God. No. No.

God promises judgment here for a different reason than that. He promises because the basic standards of humanity have been broken.

One group of humans has had a callous disregard for another group of humans. And by doing this, our passage shows us a clear word from God of truth. It puts us into the mind of God and tells us what God thinks.

We hear that he knows that he knows we are created beings. We live in his created world. And in that created world, there are decent and right ways to do things.

Right ways of treating each other. And God will hold us to account for that. We will have to face him in relation to the way we treat others and we will have to give an account to him.

[21 : 38] Multiple scriptures testify of that in the Bible. So sisters and brothers, consider the way you treat others. That's my first bit of application for today. Consider the way you treat others and remember this.

That if God's judgment was tough on Edom, it was tougher on Israel. Israel knew God's mercy and goodness in a way that others did not.

And so, think about this. If you're a Christian here today, then you know God's mercy in a way that those who do not know Jesus cannot know.

That's true, isn't it? Do you know what? Do you know what Scripture says to us? It says to us, to whom much has been given, much will be demanded.

To whom much has been given, much will be demanded. Jesus calls us, God's Christian people, to love others as we have been loved by him. And God will call us to account.

[22 : 47] So for sinning your life in this area, please, bring it before God. If you've wronged a brother or sister in Christ, then bring before God your sin against your brother or sister.

Bring before God your sin against your fellow humans and seek God's forgiveness in Christ. This is a serious matter for God. Perhaps even apologize and repent to the fellow human you have wronged, but also determine that you will change.

Love as you have been loved. For as Jesus says, to whom much has been given, from much will be demanded. Let's now turn to the last section of the book.

Verses 15 to 21. Actually, I think there's some verses I've got wrong in here, wrong numbers, so you can work it out. The last section that I have talks about the day of the Lord.

Can you see it in verse 15? It tells us that on that day, the Lord is near upon all nations. Now, in the Old Testament prophets, the term the day of the Lord was a term used to describe God's coming judgment.

[24 : 03] It was the day God would set things right in his world. When he would sovereignly intervene in the world to establish his will in his world and for his people.

Now, we've already been introduced to the day of the Lord, back in verse 8, in that day declares the Lord, I will not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau.

You can see in verse 8 that the phrase that day refers to a time of judging the men of Edom. And I think something similar is happening but different in verses 15 to 21.

So please grasp this. This is where I think it's important, very important that we grasp something different is going on. Something similar but different appears to be happening. The focus moves, I think, from Esau to all the nations and perhaps, perhaps even to the end of time.

He promises judgment on Edom and the nations in verses 15, 16 and 18. But he promises salvation to God's holy people in 17 and 18. But now look at verses 19 and 20 where Obadiah predicts a return to the promised land.

[25 : 11] He says, the people from the Negev, that's down in the south, will occupy the mountains of Esau. And the people from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines.

They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria and Benjamin will possess Gilead. And then in verse 20, he predicts how those now in exile will repossess the land God gave to them.

Can you see it there, verse 21? Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau and the kingdom will be the Lord's. Did you see it?

The very mountains that Esau boasted in will be governed by God-appointed deliverers and God will rule and the kingdom will be the Lord's.

Sisters and brothers, let me just now talk to us about preparing for God's coming great day. The final passage is I think hard to understand but I think the thrust of it is clear.

[26 : 16] God has a day it's a day coming up it's a day of judgment and on that day only those who belong to God will be safe.

In the New Testament we learn a little more about this day the day of the Lord. In the New Testament it often goes associated with the coming of the Lord Jesus second coming of the Lord Jesus.

It will be a day just as described here in Obadiah it will be unexpected it will be accompanied by judgment and vindication as in Obadiah there will be two locations two destinies only one of those locations and destinies will be safe.

the New Testament tells us the only place to be safe is not in a location but in a person in the Lord Jesus Christ and you only get to be in Jesus as you trust in him for your salvation.

however complicated these last verses are the truth of them is clear there is a judgment coming upon the world on that day God will vindicate his son and he will judge the world on that day as in Obadiah all humans will be held accountable by God for their actions.

[27 : 41] Obadiah the only safe place to be on that day of judgment is to be with God's people in the New Testament and now the only safe place to be is with God's people who put their faith in Jesus the Messiah Jesus the Christ sisters and brothers the ultimate question therefore for us in life is have we lined up with God's Messiah Jesus the Christ the future is when the kingdom shall be the Lord's and that Lord is Jesus have you lined up with him for in him alone is salvation found so if you are a Christian here today give thanks for the salvation you have in Christ rejoice in it and determine that you will love as you have been loved in Christ and if you are not a Christian here today or listening online then I urge you to become

Christian that is to put your trust in Jesus and if you need to talk to someone about it then please come and talk to one of the leaders here or find a friend who knows about Jesus and I'll be glad to help you but let us pray for these verses friends speak of a day that came in the past that is a shadow of the day to come and it's going to happen and God urges us to be ready like he urged them to be ready so let's pray father we thank you that you are a God who loves justice and who loves his people we thank you that you are the righteous judge of all the earth we are also thankful that you are long suffering not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance in the light of your coming judgment upon the world we pray that you would help us trust in Jesus live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the day of God and speed its coming we pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Jesus the Messiah Jesus the Christ Amen