

OBADIAH 1:10-14 - OPPOSING GOD'S CHOSEN

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I. Introduction

II. Context

- A. Journeying through the book of the minor prophet Obadiah.
- B. Biblical and historical development of twin brothers: Jacob (who is Israel) and Esau (who is Edom).
- C. Israel, the offspring of Jacob, who stood in the line of God's blessing, was opposed by the offspring of Jacob's brother Esau—the Edomites.
- D. The interrelationship between Esau and Jacob, that is, between *Edom* and *Israel*, serves as an illustration on at least two levels.
 - 1. Firstly: the persecution and hatred of the descendants of Jacob by the descendants of Esau which results in the downfall of Edom in history past.
 - 2. Secondly: the ongoing persecution and hatred of Israel by the gentile nations of the world in their refusal to accept the plan of God for Israel which results in a yet-future judgment of the gentile nations.
 - a) This second aspect comes to the fore near the end of the Book of Obadiah—which we will explore in our next time together in Obadiah.
- E. In our last time in Obadiah we explored verses 5-9 where we saw the means by which God said he would bring about Edom's downfall: by revealing her hidden secrets and destroying wisdom itself from her midst: by means of the perversion of wisdom, Edom would be a participant in *her own undoing*.
- F. The passage before us today reveals the motivation behind Edom's opposition of Israel: rooted in the jealousy of one brother in rejecting the blessings God had bestowed upon his twin brother.

III. Scripture Passage

- A. Obadiah 1:10-14
"For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side-In the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem-even you [were] as one of them. But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah In the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid [hands] on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those

among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress.”

- B. The passage depicts a time of great distress for Israel – which many associate with the Babylonian overthrow of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. – where instead of extending brotherly support for the descendents of Jacob, the Edomites exhibited both passive and active opposition to Israel.
- C. This combination of inactivity and activity on the part of Edom, proved to be highly significant in the eyes of God. Edom was Israel’s twin brother? What had become of his support? What served to turn Esau’s descendents to oppose Jacob to whom God’s blessing had been given?

IV. Main Theme - Jealousy

- A. There is a fable wherein the Devil once was crossing the Libyan desert and met a group of friends tempting a holy hermit. They tried seductions of the flesh, used doubts and fears, and various other means . . . but to no avail. The holy man was unmoved. The Devil then stepped forward saying: “Your methods are too crude. Permit me one moment.” Going to the hermit, he said, “Have you heard the news? Your brother has been made the Bishop of Alexandria.” A scowl of malignant jealousy soon clouded the serene face of the holy man. [Tan]
- B. Jealousy – the powerful and often unseen motivation behind opposition to one who receives an advantage.
- C. As Webster’s Dictionary puts it, jealousy is, a “hostility toward a rival or one believed to enjoy an advantage.”
- D. Often, the greatest jealousy occurs in situations where the difference between the two rivals is the slightest.
 - 1. The more similar the situation of the two rivals, the more difficult it becomes to explain or justify just why it is that one of the rivals obtains an advantage while the other does not—the distance between their resulting situations is accented by the similarity of their origin.
 - 2. Frequently, God is blamed because the difference in the situation of the two rivals is difficult to attribute to anything else other than ‘fate’ or, more biblically, in the case of Jacob and Esau: the sovereign choice of God.
 - a) Both were in the line of blessing originating in Abraham and descending through his son, Isaac.
 - b) Both were conceived at the same time: they were twins—a point which Paul emphasizes in his discussion of this them in chapter 9 of the Book of Romans (Rom. 9:10).
 - c) Yet it was Jacob, and not Esau, who was to stand in the line of blessing originating in Abraham. As God revealed to Rebekah:

- (1) "Two nations *are* in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23)
- d) On his deathbed, through the sovereign mystery of God working in the midst of sin, Isaac wound up giving his blessing to Jacob rather than Esau:
 - (1) Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed *be* everyone who curses you, and blessed *be* those who bless you!" (Genesis 27:28-29)
- e) Although Jacob was deceived in rendering this blessing upon Jacob rather than Esau, he recognized God's sovereign hand in what had transpired as evidenced by a further blessing he bestowed upon Jacob prior to his departure to Padan Aram:
 - (1) "May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham." (Genesis 28:3-4)
3. In the case of Jacob and Esau, there was little else that stood between them except God's sovereign choice of Jacob, which—as the record of these chapters in Genesis clearly illustrates—was not due to any righteousness on the part of Jacob. In fact, to the contrary:
 - a) God's sovereign choice of Jacob was based both upon His will as it would continue to work its way out in history.
 - b) The blessings given to Jacob were no indication of a greater righteousness, worth, or deservedness on the part of Jacob himself—his very name indicating otherwise and meaning "one who supplants [another]".
4. Don't miss this KEY:
 - a) Much that transpires in the Bible has less to do with innate righteous behavior and more to do with God's sovereign will working in the midst of sin, never endorsing sin but also never being thwarted by it.
- E. Thus, the hatred which Esau and his descendents, the Edomites, exhibited toward Jacob and his descendents, the Israelites, was rooted in an intense jealousy which refused to endorse God's sovereign choice to bless one of the twin brothers in a special way.

V. Biblical Illustration

A. How Jealousy Develops

1. Jealousy is a particularly deep-seated and destructive force which typically moves through a series of increasingly desperate responses.
2. It often begins with a passive seed of bitterness or resentment, which continues to be "watered" until it eventually manifests itself in active opposition to the rival.

3. This sequence is clearly evident in the life of the first king of Israel, Saul , in relationship with David.

B. Saul & David

1. David & Goliath

- a) Philistines on one mountain, Saul's army of Israel on another mountain.
- b) A valley between.
- c) For 40 days, Goliath, this giant of a man, went forth with his overwhelming armor and weaponry to taunt the armies of Israel who remained 'frozen' on the opposite side of the valley, unable to meet his challenge and fearful of attacking the Philistines on the other side.
- d) Israel was 'stuck' – this was not just a risk to Saul's reputation and leadership – it went far beyond that: it was an affront to the entire nation and their God.
- e) It is during situations like this that interpersonal animosities among the fearful wane giving way for a search for any solution to the insurmountable problem.
- f) At the moment when David went forth and slew Goliath, it is unlikely that there was even the smallest of seeds of jealousy in the hearts of those watching in Israel.
- g) Every heart and mind was with David seeking the overthrow of the Philistine giant and in the miracle that ensued one can only imagine the surge of excitement and vindication that swept through the army when the most unexpected of all outcomes prevailed: a slight shepherd boy of little means felled the most impressive adversary Israel had ever faced.
- h) Scripture records that the men of Israel, "arose and SHOUTED, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron."
- i) The slaying of Goliath, by any means was a tremendous victory for God's people and a blessing for every individual Israelite.

2. Saul's Growing Jealousy

- a) In recognition of David's victory, Saul took David into his household and set him over his men of war. Here was the potential for great blessing for both Saul and David, if Saul would but accept God's elevation of David—but such was not to be.
- b) We see the first seeds of jealousy in Saul's reaction to the people's praise for David.
 - (1) Now it had happened as they were coming *home*, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *only* thousands. Now *what* more

can he have but the kingdom?" So Saul eyed David from that day forward. (1 Samuel 18:6-9)

(2) NOTE:

- (a) Comparison – Jealousy almost always involves one rival's dislike for the advancement of the other which stems in a comparison with the rival and a belief that whatever benefit the rival has should be ours. JEALOUSY PUTS OUR EYES ON OTHERS INSTEAD OF GOD.
 - (b) Saul eyed David – this was more than just watching David. He watched David *suspiciously*. Jealousy often arouses its twin: suspicion.
 - i) Wrongly held suspicion of David by Saul proved to be a malignant cancer which continually twisted Saul's assessment of David's motives—weaving a growing fear and hatred of David into the very fabric of Saul's existence. Saul eventually was to become obsessed with the threat of David's righteous promotion. JEALOUSY FUELS SUSPICION AND PARANOIA.
 - (c) Seeing good as bad – the accomplishments and character of David were good for Saul and for Israel. God's blessing upon David was also a blessing upon God's people. Yet Saul was unable to accept this benefit showering down from God, but twisted it into fuel for hatred: JEALOUSY DISTORTS THE ABILITY TO PERCEIVE REALITY.
- c) It was only one day later that Saul's jealousy manifested itself in violence when Saul attempted to pin David to a wall with a spear (1K. 18:10).
 - d) Thus began the long destructive slide of Saul toward ever-increasing paranoia, despair, and ungodliness. In the end, it led him so far away from God that he wound up consulting a medium to hear from the dead rather than the living God.
 - e) Although there are moments where Saul appears to regain perspective and relent from persecuting David, these are fleeting and inconsistent. His paranoia and distorted self-interest quickly regain the upper hand as he resumes his downward spiral.
 - f) The biblical record of Saul's jealousy-fueled disintegration is a testimony to the destructive power of jealousy when it is allowed to fester and grow to maturity.
3. Jonathan & David.
- a) What a contrast is found in the relationship between Jonathan, Saul's son, and David.
 - b) By all rights, Jonathan, being the heir to Saul's throne, had every reason to follow his father's lead in being jealous and paranoid of David (1S. 20:31), yet his reaction was completely different.
 - c) After David's defeat of Goliath, we read:

(1) Now when he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (1 Samuel 18:1)

d) Even when Jonathan came to realize that God's blessing was on David to the extent that he would eventually become king, he said to David:

(1) "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that." (1 Samuel 23:17)

4. What was Different?

a) Both Saul and Jonathan risked losing the throne to David.

b) Jonathan saw the hand of God in David's elevation whereas Saul saw only himself and his own comparison with David.

c) Jonathan recognized and acted in support of God's plan for David whereas Saul opposed it.

VI. Edom & Israel

A. Having examined some of the characteristics of jealousy in the life of Saul, let's return now to the passage before us in Obadiah.

B. The passage emphasizes the relationship between Edom and Jacob.

1. v. 10 – "For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you"

2. v. 12 – "But you should have not gazed on the day of your brother"

a) The jealousy which the Edomites harbored was made worse by the fact that the origin of Edom and Israel was as closely identical.

b) The descendents of Esau harbored the belief that they should have received the blessings that went, instead, to the descendents of his brother.

3. v. 11 – "In the day that you stood on the other side – in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, even you were as one of them."

a) The Edomites had a special relationship with the Israelites—one that should have been a source of blessing being a near family member. If they had behaved in a loving, supportive manner—as befits a family member—they too no doubt would have been greatly blessed.

b) Instead, they behaved in the same way as foreigners and strangers who opposed Israel. Because of their family tie to Jacob, this was particularly egregious in the sight of God.

C. God identifies Himself with Israel

1. v. 13 – "You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity"

2. Edom's actions against Israel were tantamount to opposing God.

3. God had chosen Israel to be a peculiar people set aside for His purposes.
 - a) He had called them "My people" when he instructed Moses to deliver them from Egypt (Ex. 3:7).
 - b) He called them His "special treasure" when he gave them the Law at Mt. Sinai (Ex.19:5).
 - c) He told them, "I . . . have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine" (Lev. 20:26).
 - d) When reviewing Israel's status to the generation about to cross the Jordan to enter the promised land, Moses reiterated, "the Lord has proclaimed you to be His special people" (Deu. 26:18) and "the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance."
 - e) This theme continuous throughout the Old Testament and even into the New.¹
 - (1) Writing after the rejection of Messiah Jesus and His crucifixion at the hands of the Romans and Israel, Paul says of the nation of Israel:
 - (a) . . . to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises; of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen. (Romans 9:3-5)
 - (b) It is highly significant that Paul considers these things as continuing to be Israel's—a present tense reality rather than a forfeited relationship of the past.
4. Thus, Edom's opposition of Israel was equivalent to opposing God—a reality we will expound on more fully when we consider the remaining verses in our future times together in Obadiah.

D. The Progressive Stages of Jealousy

1. First stage: passive opposition to one's rival.
 - a) "For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side-In the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem-even you [were] as one of them. But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah In the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

¹

Ex 3:7,15,18; 6:6; 19:5-6; Le 20:26; De 4:7-8,34,37; 7:6-8; 10:15; 14:2; 26:18-19; 28:10; 32:8-9; 2Sa 7:23-24; 1Ki 8:53; 1Ch 16:13; 17:21; Ps 47:3-4; 105:6,43; 106:5-7; 135:4; 147:19-20; Isa 41:8-9; 43:1-4,10,15,20-22; 44:1-2,21; 45:4; Jer 10:16; Zec 8:23; Mt 24:22; Ac 13:17; Ro 9:4,27; 11:5

- b) Initially, Edom was content to passively rejoice in the downfall of Israel.
 - (1) She 'stood on the other side' and did not actively intervene—thereby being "as one of them" in her passive endorsement of Israel's destruction.
 - (2) She merely "gazed" – looking on at Israel's captivity.
 - (3) More than that, she rejoiced in Israel's downfall and elevated herself. The downfall of Jerusalem was seen as Edom's vindication and elevation in relation to Israel.
- c) This is a particularly insidious stage in the development of jealousy.
 - (1) It is at this stage where we may not even be aware that jealousy is already at work in our heart.
 - (2) There are no aggressive, outward, actions on our part contributing directly toward the downfall of our rival.
 - (3) We may even pray for them, but in our innermost recess we may already harbor a hope or even an expectation of their downfall.
 - (4) Failure to identify the seed of jealousy and deal with it at this stage leads inexorably to the next stage: active opposition.

2. Second stage: Actively contributing to their downfall.

- a) You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid [hands] on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress.
- b) Here we see the fully flowered fruit of Edom's jealousy over Israel. She enters the city gates, lays hands on Israel's goods. She kills some who escaped the enemy and turns over others into the hands of the enemy.

E. Opposing God

1. Obadiah speaks for God

- a) This passage in the Book of Obadiah finds its initial expression in the first verse: "Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom . . ." (Oba. 1:1).

2. In her opposition to Israel, Edom is opposing God.

3. Important Biblical principle:

- a) Although God uses nations to judge His people, woe to that nation which knows better and still participates in such judgment. God will subsequently judge her motives.
- b) . . . 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I am zealous for Jerusalem And for Zion with great zeal. I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; for I was a little angry, and they helped-*but* with evil *intent*.'" (Zechariah 1:14b-15)

VII. Application

A. In Relation to Israel

1. Edom is here judged for her opposition to God's chosen nation: Israel.
2. She, of all nations, should have known better—being the descendent of Esau the twin brother of Jacob and who had first-hand knowledge of the promises bestowed upon Jacob—who is Israel—by God.
3. Next time, we will see how Edom's opposition of Israel and her historical judgment serves as a model for the rejection of God's choice of Israel by the gentile nations of the world and their future judgment.

B. Personal

1. Which characteristics of jealousy seen here and in the life of Saul in relation to David may already be at work in our own hearts?
2. Are there people in our life who have been blessed or elevated in ways we haven't which has led us to secretly desire negative things in their life—or even failure?
3. When others are blessed by God, do we rejoice with them? Or do we harbor feelings of envy and question whether blessing shouldn't have been ours instead?
4. Are there seeds of jealousy in the fertile topsoil of our own heart which we need to pull out before they become firmly rooted and begin to distort our perception of people's motives or result in ungodly thoughts and actions on our part?

VIII. PRAYER

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