



Obadiah

Minor Prophets #1 • July 13, 2025 • Steve Howell

Personal Note



Good morning! It's great to be back with you today after a couple of Sundays away for vacation. Our family (all four of us!) had a great trip out west, spending some time with family and relaxing in the (Deb would say "refreshing"...I would say "oppressive") Arizona heat.

But before we start today's message, I just want to say that I so appreciate Jordan Teghtmeyer and Jerry Parrish filling in during my absence (Applaud). It's wonderful that we have people in our congregation who are willing to step up and serve in that way. I know they both wanted to serve as mouthpieces, not centerpieces. Their focus was on proclaiming God's message, not getting any personal glory out of it! That's how it should be, and that's how it was.

Thank you again, gentlemen, for sharing God's Word with all of us!

Series Intro

Our last series ("Wanna Bet?" talking about risk) drew to a close before I left, so today we have the joy of launching a new topic of study.



As you can see from the bulletin and the slide, we're going to be talking about...the Minor Prophets!!! (Woot Woot!) Some of you are excited; some of you are uncertain. Some of you are wondering where to find them in your Bible (*Hint – go to the New Testament...Gospel of Matthew...and then start backing up. The last 12 books of the Old Testament are called the Minor Prophets. That's where we'll be*).

After a few different topical studies, I thought it was important to go back to some actual Bible *books*. But why this section? Let me answer via Netflix.



I watched a documentary on Netflix over vacation about the search for Osama Bin Ladin. It was fascinating to see the way intelligence and military groups pursued this mastermind of the 9/11 attacks.

Once Bin Ladin's secret hiding place was finally discovered, our forces had a small window of time to prepare their attack. Bin Ladin was found in Pakistan, supposedly out of reach of our military. But the U.S. made a plan to covertly enter their airspace. Bin Ladin was in a highly protected and secretive compound; no one had access to it, so the inside was a mystery. But the Navy Seals who were going on this mission needed to get every detail right in their planning and preparation...even if they didn't know what they might encounter.

Here's what I think is amazing. Not knowing what was on the interior of the compound, the team built a life-size mock-up of the structure. The exterior and the walls (the parts that could be seen from satellite imagery) were replicated with ease. But inside, the layout was unknown. So...they created moveable walls! The Seals would practice entering the compound with one configuration...then do it again after the walls were changed around inside! They did this hundreds of times, changing walls and stairs and scenarios for each walkthrough.

*They prepared for **every situation** by exposing themselves to different layouts and situations. That way, when real life happened, they would be **equipped**!*



Now do the Minor Prophets make sense?

As we start this sermon series today, I want you to think about it like the Navy Seals preparing for the unknown. They exposed themselves to hundreds of different layouts so they would always know how to respond when they were in their moment of action.

And in your Bible, we have hundreds of different chapters in scores of different books that are provided for us to study and learn and prepare. It's our job as a church to help you gain exposure to as much of it as possible, to prepare you for different situations you might encounter in life and in your faith. Some passages are easy and well-known. Others, like the Minor Prophets (this section making up less than 10% of the Old Testament...hence the "minor" label) are a bit more obscure.

Whether major or minor in length, *all* of them are major in importance!

As some of you know, this subject matter is near and dear to me...and not just because of the beards. Back in 2016, I was blessed



to publish a book with my friend and co-author, Dr. Nathan Jones. **12**
Faith Journeys of the Minor Prophets was an exploration of this
section of Scripture, part commentary and part encouragement for
the reader.

But I'm not preaching on the Minor Prophets because I wrote some chapters
about them a decade ago. I'm preaching from these prophetic books
because they matter! They are "small, but mighty." Each one gives the reader
a glimpse into the heart of God, revealing messages from a Divine Author
that open our eyes to His heart and character. As He addresses a situation,
we hear not just *about* Him...we hear *from* Him!

By the way, if anyone questions the relevance of this Old Testament
literature, may I remind you that the God of the Old Testament is **not**
different from the God of the New Testament!



"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."
(Hebrews 13:8, ESV)

The Son was present in Creation (John 1:1). The Father was present at
the cross. The Spirit will be present at the end of days. All three-in-
one have been present in every era and situation, including when
these divine messages were delivered.



The powerful messages of the Minor Prophets can point us toward a coming
Messiah. They can connect us with Jesus, even if He isn't directly
addressed. And they can also help us learn what matters to Him.

Your faith will benefit from a fuller understanding of these short Bible books.
Our relationship with God will grow as we hear from Him. You and I will be
blessed to study these messages and find application to our daily lives!

Remember:



*"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for
reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,"*
(2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)

So, this morning let's start out with a book that will be profitable, even if you
didn't know it existed (you'll be glad it does): the prophet **Obadiah**!

Before we dive in, would you pray with me?

Prayer

*For **understanding**...for **wisdom**...for a **heart** that is ready to hear and apply. **Thank you** for inspiring this part of Scripture. May it be **profitable** for us this morning! Amen!*



Read It: Obadiah 1-21

The prophecy of Obadiah is a **quick read**. At **twenty-one verses**, it is a tiny book that doesn't even warrant chapter divisions. Tucked between Amos and Jonah, Obadiah's message spans just one or two pages of text – the **shortest** book of prophecy in the entire Bible. Obadiah communicates an entire message in **less than half the words** of almost any other prophet in the Bible (By comparison, Jeremiah uses seventy-five words for every one that Obadiah writes!). If any prophet seems “**minor**,” Obadiah surely qualifies!

Since it is so short, though, I think it is fitting to hear it. I've grabbed the **Word of Promise** dramatized audio Bible to share this passage this morning (this one is using the New King James Version). Turn in your Bibles to Obadiah and follow along.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vu-kc_AWBFs&t=13s

(Video Time: 4:45)

First reaction: that's intense!

The audio version can help us catch the sense of this passage. The intensity of the reading can communicate when the passage conveys judgment; the musical score can show when the passage shifts to convey hope. But if you were just reading Obadiah on your own, you might struggle to catch those nuances.

I'll be real about it. Some of the prophets are hard to read and understand! They start off with no details, little context, and a weird mix of people and places and situations that are addressed with confusing metaphors and hard-to-identify speakers! You are thrown into a message written to a different people at a different time in a different culture.

But if someone dropped you off in the middle of Tokyo, you wouldn't expect to understand everything, either. The challenges of language and the

barriers of behavior would be real and difficult. It's hard to jump into something so far removed from your daily experience. Nevertheless, you'd still explore!

So, let me challenge you to do the same with the prophets...explore! And let me be a guide to point out some details that will enhance your understanding.

What can we learn from Obadiah? Let's start with an overview.

An Overview of Obadiah



The Background

To start, we don't know anything about the author. **Obadiah** (whose name means "Servant of Yahweh") shares nothing about himself in the text, and history doesn't pinpoint anything about him either. So, we are left trying to learn about Obadiah and his faith simply by knowing more about the **period of time** in which he lived and delivered his message.

But that's a problem, too. The message of the book is somewhat vague when it comes to historical facts!



We know it was written **sometime after an attack had been made on the city of Jerusalem**. The attack involved a few elements that Obadiah describes:

- the enemy breached the city and took plunder (v. 11),
- the enemy destroyed life and property (v. 12, 14),
- the enemy was assisted by the nation of Edom (v. 11, 14).

Those details could apply to several different encounters, but most likely it is referring to a big event in Jewish history: the conquest of Judah by the nation of Babylon in 586 BC. In that conquest (which played a pivotal role in Scripture), the city of Jerusalem was destroyed and much of the population was deported into exile. The Promised Land was left in ruins, and God's people felt the weight of punishment, knowing that He had allowed their defeat as a consequence of sin and idolatry.

The plight of the Jews in this defeat and exile is a focus of many prophets in the Old Testament, and you can learn more about it in the historical books of Kings, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

But as he discusses the situation here, Obadiah delivers his message to an unexpected audience. His message from God surprises us because he writes, not to the Jewish audience we would expect, but instead to the nation of Edom – one of Judah’s enemies in the attack!



Who is Edom? Here’s what you need to know about them:

- Edom was a nation located in the **rugged, mountainous** area **south and east of the Dead Sea**
- Just like Israel was a nation descended from Jacob, Edom was a nation **descended from Jacob’s brother, Esau**. (See Genesis 25ff). Scripture shares about their country and rulers in several places because they were family – distant, but family.
- As extended family, God **desired the two nations to be at peace**. *“Do not detest the Edomites or the Egyptians, because the Edomites are your relatives and you lived as foreigners among the Egyptians.”* (Deuteronomy 23:7, NLT)
- But Edom had always **struggled to get along** with Israel, opposing them and fighting with them periodically through their history....like here in Obadiah.



In this recent defeat of Judah by the Babylonians, Edom’s opposition was on full display. Edom was a happy spectator and willing accomplice to attacks on God’s people...

... so now, Obadiah writes, Edom is going to face a thorough reckoning as punishment for her sins. God will remember to repay, and it will be severe.

The Message

As a prophet, it is Obadiah’s job to take God’s message and share it. He structures it for rhetorical impact. For this short book, Obadiah does so in a way that flows like a reverse court proceeding. Instead of an *indictment* followed by a *sentence*, Obadiah starts with Edom’s *fate* and then articulates Edom’s *crimes*.

Edom’s Fate

The fate of Edom is destruction! Nations will rise up against Edom and destroy her.





“The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom: We have heard a report from the Lord, and a messenger has been sent among the nations: “Rise up! Let us rise against her for battle!””
(Obadiah 1, ESV)

The Edomites probably laughed when they heard this. Edom had a justifiably strong sense of protection. Their red sandstone mountains provided the nation with a lot of **natural protection**. Mountain ridges, steep canyons, and deep gorges coupled with manmade fortresses made Edom a difficult place to assault. Obadiah’s reference to *“those who dwell in the clefts of the rock”* (v. 3) hints at the security that came from their homeland.¹

“Who will bring me down to the ground?” they ask with arrogance (v. 3). They *“ascend as high as the eagle”* and *“set [their] nest among the stars”* (v. 4), places that few would dare to approach. But the answer comes swiftly: God will bring them down!



There is a **thoroughness and totality** to the destruction Obadiah prophesies. In verse one, we see that **God plans to use other nations** to judge Edom as opposed to using a natural disaster. God employs the desires of free-will humans to work in concert with His own agenda. Their combined purpose is to **defeat Edom militarily** – not just to the point of submission but **to the point of elimination**.

In **contrast to robbers**, whose thievery has limits, or **grape-gatherers**, who leave some fruit still hanging, Edom’s destruction at the hand of this military force is going to be total (v. 5). As one commentator mentions, the Lord always promised to protect a remnant of the Israelites when they faced destruction, but no similar assurance is given to Edom.²



Edom’s Crimes

Why is this happening? It is because Edom is complicit in the attack on God’s people (*Like the German citizens who cheered on and helped the Nazi soldiers in WWII*).

¹ Armerding, C. E. (1986). Obadiah. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets* (Vol 7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. p. 338.

² Armerding, p. 344.

The book of Psalms highlights their attitude:



“O Lord, remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem. “Destroy it!” they yelled. “Level it to the ground!”” (Psalm 137:7, NLT)

Obadiah shares additional details in a series of tightly structured, parallel rebukes. In verses 12-14, the first line of each rebuke informs Edom **“You should not...”** while the second line of each rebuke describes Judah’s troubles **“in the day...”** For example:



*“...do not rejoice over the people of Judah **in the day of their ruin...**” (Obadiah 12, ESV)*

Edom is condemned for **gloating...rejoicing...entering** and **looting...preventing escape...**and even **sending people back** to the enemy.

Because Edom watched and joined in the crimes against Judah, **God** ordained that Edom would share a similar fate of destruction. In what is called a **“day of the Lord”** (a common prophetic phrase indicating a time of judgment in the near future or in the end times, or sometimes both) punishment is shown as a forgone conclusion for Edom.



“The day is near when I, the Lord, will judge all godless nations! As you have done to Israel, so it will be done to you. All your evil deeds will fall back on your own heads. Just as you swallowed up my people on my holy mountain, so you and the surrounding nations will swallow the punishment I pour out on you. Yes, all you nations will drink and stagger and disappear from history.” (Obadiah 15–16, NLT)

God remembered, and Edom would not escape.



Judah’s Blessing

God could have ended His message there. He could have had Obadiah clean the ink off his quill, roll up the parchment and sent it off. But He doesn’t. Instead, He goes on to **share His intent** for this punishment. The punishment will not just have consequences for Edom; it will have **consequences for Judah...** consequences which will bolster their faith!

Though God’s plan for Edom is destruction, Obadiah says, His plan for His people in Judah is glory! There will be deliverance and holiness (v. 17). The Jews will *“possess their possessions”* (v. 17) and return to the land God had

promised His people long ago. Judah and Israel will be secure while Edom burns up (v. 18). This is God's plan, and it is presented with certainty.



In fact, the final portion of Obadiah's vision presents a victorious change. Judah is no longer suffering and downtrodden; they are pictured **returning to take the Promised Land in victory** as God lays out his plan for conquest. Every direction on the map (represented in the text by country and city names) will fall under His control. In the end, God will have His kingdom firmly established.



The Takeaway: God Cares How We Treat Others

As we consider lessons from Obadiah, this section gives us a clear glimpse into the heart of God. And one of the lessons we discover is that:



God cares how we treat others!

It mattered how Edom treated Judah; it matters how we treat others.

Read through God's Word and you'll find admonitions to treat others with kindness and compassion in their time of trouble. Consider the following verses as examples:



"If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?" (1 John 3:17, NLT)



"For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me." "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did [do any of this]' "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'" (Matthew 25:35-40, NLT)

God wants our compassion to reflect His own!

So, take a moment for honest reflection. **How do you treat others... especially those in difficult situations?**



I don't want to get too political here, but one current conversation was on my heart as I read through Obadiah. Is our view toward immigrants more like the Edomites, or more like the verses I just read?! When the topic of illegal immigration comes up, are you more concerned about law, order, and

resources... or is your concern for the human beings fleeing dangerous situations?



“You should not have stood at the crossroads, killing those who tried to escape. You should not have captured the survivors and handed them over in their terrible time of trouble.” (Obadiah 14, NLT)



Could Obadiah’s words still apply? If people are trying to get out of cartel-infested communities in Juarez, do we truly care? Does it break our hearts to see them struggle, especially when we consider that many might be our brothers and sisters in Christ? Can our compassion extend to those who haven’t perfectly followed U.S. codes?

I know that immigration policies are complicated, and not all immigrants are upstanding individuals. I agree: people *should* arrive in this country in a legal, orderly fashion. Know that my Biblical question this morning isn’t a call for a specific policy; this is in no way a rebuke of law enforcement doing their jobs.

It’s just a heart check. If someone from Mexico or Honduras makes a bad legal choice, is your first reaction to see him or her as a child of God. Do you love them anyway? Or has your heart grown hard?

God *destroyed* a nation in part for its lack of compassion! And I don’t want us to be desensitized to the part of God’s character that cares for the downtrodden, the fatherless, the alien, and the widow. I want us to share His heart!



If you don’t want to talk about the border, then think about how you treat other kinds of suffering. The person facing spiritual oppression. The couple trapped in debt. Think about the young adult who is in bondage to chemicals or images. Think about the senior saint who is besieged by depression. Do you love them? Or has your heart grown hard?

Satan has pressed the attack on these folks! That’s why Peter reminds us to:



“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8, NLT)

Don’t pile on! Don’t support Satan’s schemes to isolate us from one another. Don’t be like Edom joining in the attack: Don’t **gloat**...don’t **rejoice**...don’t **take advantage**...don’t **get in the way**...and don’t **surrender**



them to the enemy. On Satan's day of attack, don't help him devour! Instead, ask how you can show compassion and love to those who have been his victims.

Remember, **God cares how we treat others!**

Closing

Obadiah gives us a window into this part of God's heart. He shares a situation that can equip us for action. If we are citizens of His Kingdom, we trust that God will remember His promises and victoriously carry them out. But we can't just celebrate in the defeat of God's enemies...we must live differently than them. We need to be concerned by suffering and choose to show love to the hurting.

Let your compassion be made known in the way you love others. **God cares how we treat them!**



Prayer

God, we thank you for Obadiah and the continued relevance of Your message. We don't want to be like the Edomites; we want to have your heart instead.

So this morning, we pray for those who are facing struggles and Satan's attacks. Specifically, I want to lift up:

- *Community members who have lost loved ones this week. There are families grieving a loss*
- *Communities in TX and NM – flooding losses*

But we also praise You for Your Sovereignty over it all!

We trust that you can provide answers:

- *Like Linda (good report on the type of lung cancer she's facing – thankful for prayers)*

We ask for help in living differently toward others. Open our eyes to others' suffering, and please help us show godly compassion and care for them. Amen.

Invitation

For our time of invitation, I'd like to invite you to a time of repentance.

- As we sing, if you recognize that your heart has gotten out of alignment with God's, especially in the area of compassion, then I invite you to come forward (or stay in your seat) and offer up a confession to Him. Accept His forgiveness in Jesus, but ask for His help to repent and change now.
- Allow us to pray for you and support you in that change.

Sermon Notes

Minor Prophets

(Hebrews 13:8; 2 Timothy 3:16)

Obadiah 1-21

An Overview of Obadiah

- **The Background** (Deuteronomy 23:7)
- **The Message**
 - o Edom's Fate (Obadiah 1)
 - o Edom's Crimes (Psalm 137:7; Obadiah 15-16)
 - o Judah's Blessing (

The Takeaway

God cares how we treat others!

(1 John 3:17; Matthew 25:35-40; Obadiah 14; 1 Peter 5:8)

Sermon Discussion Questions

Fellowship—Relationship with a Purpose

- Have you ever read the Minor Prophets (last 12 books of the Old Testament)? If so, what is your impression of them? If not, why not? Consider 2 Timothy 3:16...

Growth—Thinking About Spiritual Matters

- Read the book of Obadiah (21 verses).
- Do you need to know much about Obadiah as a person to learn from his prophecy? How might his anonymity help you focus more on the message from God?
- Look on a Bible map to find Edom. How were the Israelites supposed to interact with Edom? See Deuteronomy 23:7.
- How did Edom interact with Israel? See Psalm 137:7 and Obadiah 12-14. Why do you think the Edomites failed to treat their brothers (Israel) with concern rather than contempt?
- Why did Edom's actions deserve judgment from God?
- Edom's pride assured their downfall. How does pride blind us to God's will?
- How would Edom's downfall provide encouragement to the Jews who suffered at their hands? Why might God's timeline for justice be better than our own?
- How do you treat others who are going through difficult circumstances? Do you show God's love as fully as you should? What holds you back?
- Read Matthew 25:35-40. How could you be a blessing to others in need?

Prayer – Taking Your Thoughts to God

- Ask God to open your eyes to see people's suffering. Pray for His help in showing godly compassion and care for those people.