

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

Obadiah | *Mr. Red & the Prince*¹

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III. Pastoral Transition at North Center

We are approaching the **one-year mark** of the pastoral transition here at North Center. As I reflect on that season of transition last year, one of most common comments that I heard from people was that I had “**mighty big shoes to fill**” 😊

If you were one of those who made a comment like that, there’s two things I want to say to you:

- The first thing I want to let you know is how much I love that comment – because...
 - It tells me about the relationship that you have with your pastor.
 - It tells me that you love him and respect him and that he has shepherded you well.²
- My second response to a comment like that is “*that’s not how God works.*” God doesn’t gift two pastors with the exact same gifts.
 - He doesn’t give us the same talents or the same strengths
 - He doesn’t give us the same passions or the same personalities
 - He doesn’t give us the same opportunities or the same resources

And the same is true (not just for pastors) but for every single individual.

- We spend so much of our lives comparing ourselves to others when that isn’t God’s plan for our lives at all; God didn’t make you to be anybody else.³

This is true for pastors, for people, and this is true for every church.

¹ The Proudful & the Pride Fall

² It tells me that he has taken his pastoral responsibilities seriously and that you have recognized his pastoral calling in your life. When a church tells the young pastor that he has big shoes to fill, that should not intimidate the young pastor. Rather, it should encourage him to see that God has brought him to a church that has a history of loving & respecting their pastors.

³ This is one of the things that the apostle Paul spent quite a bit of time talking about in his letter to the church in Corinth (**1 Cor. 12:4–6**). God has given each of us different gifts **so that**, as we do life together, (1) we might see a bigger, fuller picture of what He is like, (2) so that we might have more ways of serving one another and caring for one another, and (3) so that we might have more opportunities for reaching the nations with the good news of Jesus.

The **purpose** of the gifts is for the *edification* of the body (**14:12**). And the purpose of the body is to reach the nations. If we don’t have a desire to reach the nations with the good news of Jesus, we don’t understand what it means to be a church. The **mission** Jesus gave to the church was to reach the nations. The foremost reason Jesus gave us **His Spirit** was to empower us to reach the nations.

God has intentionally made every single church different:

- No church has the exact same *potential* as North Center
- No church has our *people* (with our diversity and our personalities and our family dynamics and our history)
- No church is *located* precisely where we are (in this neighborhood and this community)
 - Did you know that, not only is **Brooklyn Park** & **Brooklyn Center** the most diverse cities in Minnesota, but they are one of the most diverse cities in the country. This means that, when it comes to reaching the nations with the gospel of Jesus, we have an opportunity that is almost unheard of in the history of the world. The nations are literally our next-door neighbors.
- No church has our *youth* or our *elders* or our *deacons* or our various *ministry volunteers*
- No church has our exact *strengths* or our exact *weaknesses*
- No church has our exact *opportunities*

God has given every single one of us unique gifts that are sovereignly tailored specifically for us. This is a *good* thing. This is a *beautiful* thing. ⁴

We don't choose what kinds of gifts God gives us – or how many gifts God gives us, but we do choose whether or not we will use our gifts for His glory. ⁵

That's the first thing I think of every time I open my Bible to the book of **Obadiah**?

If you have found Obadiah in your Bible, then you have already noticed how short this book is! It's **the shortest book in the OT** and one of the shortest books in the entire Bible.

In His sovereignty, God chose to give Obadiah just 21 verses.

- The apostle Paul makes it clear that every word of prophecy was inspired by God,⁶ which means that Obadiah is 21 verses long because that's exactly how long God wanted it to be.
- In his sovereign wisdom & goodness, God gave the prophet **Isaiah** 1,292 verses, and He gave **Obadiah** 21.

⁴ Since that's true, one of the main focuses of this past year of transition has been to ask the question, "How do we leverage what God has given us as a church to maximize our effectiveness for His glory – both in our own communities and across the globe?"

⁵ **Parable of the talents** || *Matthew 25:14–30*

- None of them got to choose how many talents their Master gave them.
- All of them had the opportunity to use their talents in the service of their Master.

As a church, we are asking God to give us a passion and a vision and wisdom to use the gifts He has given us (as a church) to see the gospel of Jesus take hold of peoples' lives...

- To see hearts change; to see marriages restored; to see families thrive
- To see addictions destroyed; to see revivals in our communities
- To missionaries sent overseas; to see churches planted in every corner of the Twin Cities

"Take our life & let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee"

⁶ 2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21.

Q. So, what did Obadiah do with his 21 verses?

A. He spent every single one declaring the Word of the Lord (see **verse 1**)

- His name means “*Servant of God*” which is so appropriate because he took what God gave him, and he used it in the service of God.
- He took what God had given him, and He used it to make God known.

Reflection: what about me? What am **I** doing with the gifts that God has given **me**?

Now, let’s spend just a few minutes looking at the message of Obadiah.

Almost all of the prophets were sent to deliver a message to God’s chosen people.

- Most of them were sent to the Southern Kingdom of Judah
- A few were sent to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (e.g., Hosea & Amos)

But then, at times, God would also send His prophets to deliver a message to other nations.

- Like **Jonah** & **Nahum** preaching to the people of **Nineveh** – northeast of Israel.
- Well, **Obadiah** was also sent by God to preach to a foreign nation – south of Judah

The vision of Obadiah
Thus says the Lord God concerning **Edom**...
~ **Obadiah 1**

Who is Edom? Well, remember back to the book of **Genesis** when God called the family of Abraham to be His chosen people (**Gen 12 & 15**).

- Abraham eventually had a miracle son whose name was Isaac (**Gen 21**)
- Isaac married a woman named Rebecca (*which is a beautiful love story*) (**Gen 24**)
- And Rebecca eventually became pregnant with twin boys (**Gen 25**).

Before Rebecca gave birth to her twin sons, God tells her something about the two boys in her womb that would shape the storyline of the rest of the Bible.

²¹ Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren;
and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

²² But the children struggled together within her;
and she said, “If all is well, why am I like this?”

So she went to inquire of the Lord.

²³ And the Lord said to her:

“**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 25:21–23**

These two sons who are struggling together in your womb will become two nations, and these two nations will be separated from one another.

- ²⁴ So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth,
indeed there were twins in her womb.
- ²⁵ And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over;
so they called his name **Esau**.⁷
- ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel;
so his name was called **Jacob**...⁸
~ **Genesis 25:24–26**

These two boys, Esau & Jacob, both get their names changed before the book of Genesis is done.

- **Genesis 32** | **Jacob** wrestles with God, and he wouldn't stop wrestling with God until God blessed him. So, God changed his name to **Israel** (**32:28**), "*Prince with God*."
- **Genesis 25** | **Esau** had almost the exact opposite name-changing experience. As the firstborn son, Esau had a glorious, spiritual heritage awaiting him. When his father Isaac was gone, Esau would become the priest of the family, which meant that he would be the family member who had a very unique relationship with God. This was known as his "**birthright**", and it was the greatest honor a father could give his son. Yet, Esau didn't care about having a special relationship with God. In fact, we read (in **Gen 25:34**) that "*Esau despised his birthright*." There came a day when Esau was hungry that he sold his birthright to Jacob in exchange for a bowl of red stew, and so his name was changed to **Edom** (**25:30**) which means "*red*." He traded a relationship with God for a bowl of soup.

Jacob & Esau.

- One whose name was changed to reflect his relationship with God.
- One whose name was changed to reflect his relationship with the world.

And that became the story of the two nations that came from them: **Israel & Edom**.

- **Israel** was a people who had a special relationship with God.
- **Edom** was a people who had a love relationship with the things of this world.

And that was just the beginning of their story. Not only did Esau's descendants (**Edom**) become a people who loved the things of this world, but they became a people who hated the descendants of Jacob (**Israel**). Edom despised Israel. **For example...**

- In **Numbers 20:14–21**, we read that, when Israel was wandering through the wilderness on their way to the land that God had promised them, they came to Edom for help in their journey, and Edom refused.
- In **Psalms 137** we read that when the Babylonian army came and crushed Jerusalem and carried the Israelites away as captives to Babylon, the Edomites were actually celebrating their defeat. **Psalms 137:7** says that the Edomites were like cheerleaders who were cheering for Babylon as they destroyed the land and deported the people.

⁷ Esau means "hairy"

⁸ Jacob means "supplanter" (somebody who takes the place of another through force or scheming).

Well, eventually, God sends Obadiah to deliver “a goodbye message” to Edom.

Though you ascend as high as the eagle,
And though you set your nest among the stars,
From there **I will bring you down**,
Says the Lord.
~ **Obadiah 4**

This is **God’s message** to Edom: *I will bring you down*.

Obadiah gives two explicit reasons for this “goodbye message”

1. **Edom’s pride (3–9)**

The pride of your heart has deceived you,
You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high;
You who say in your heart,
“Who will bring me down to the ground?”
~ **Obadiah 3**

Remember, Edom was named after their relationship with the world... and that relationship never changed.

- Edom’s heart was fixed on its surroundings (its high towers, its strong borders, its military power, its economic success, its strategic political alliances), and (over time) the people began to think that they were impervious to destruction; invincible, untouchable, unstoppable.
 - Everywhere they looked, they saw strength & success.
 - As they began to see themselves as superior to the people around them.
- “Who could ever bring us down?”
- Translation: *not even God could bring us down!*

“Not even God himself could sink this ship!”

- Do you remember that?
 - On April 10, 1912, the largest and most luxurious cruise liner that had ever been built set sail on its maiden voyage. It was traveling from Southampton (a port city in southern England), and it was headed for New York City.
 - And this ship was called the “Titanic.”
 - It was such an extraordinary accomplishment that people believed “*not even God himself could sink this ship!*”
 - Four days later, (on **Sunday, April 14**) the ship collided with an iceberg, and over 1,500 people died as the ship (that not even God himself could sink) sunk.

Just as God sovereignly orchestrated the path of the ice burg that brought down the Titanic, so He was about to finally bring down the nation of Edom because of its pride.

Church, let Obadiah's message to Edom be a warning for each one of us.

- One of the most deceptive (sneaky, subtle, camouflaged) sins is pride.
- Every single one of us is prone to it.

What is pride? I looked up the word "pride" in my favorite dictionary,⁹ and this was the definition: "*Having inordinate¹⁰ self-esteem; possessing a high or unreasonable conceit¹¹ of one's own excellence, either of body or mind.*" In other words, you see yourself as better than others...

Maybe you see yourself as better than others...

- **because** of the *money* you have in your bank account...
- or because of the *scholarships* you got for college...
- or because of how well-behaved your *children* are...
- or because of the square footage of your *house*...
- or because of the size of the *jeans* you're able to fit in...
- or because of how faithful you are in attending *Sunday school*...
- or because of the fancy *car* you've got sitting in the parking lot...
- or because of how many followers you have on your *social media* page...
- or because of all the *books* you've read...
- or because of all the *experiences* you've had...
- or because you know what it's like to *suffer*...
- or because of how *devoted* you are to God...
- or **ten million etceteras**.

To see yourself as being superior to others (above others; better than others) is called **pride**. It's the way of Edom, and God hates it.

If you read through the book of Amos last week, you heard God say that He abhors *pride*.

~ **Amos 6:8**

- I hate pride (**Proverbs 8:13**)
- God resists the proud (**James 4:6**)

This was Edom. In their heart, they saw themselves as "**the eagle**" (4) which was a symbol of deity. They were above it all. And God says, "*I will bring you down.*"

- Jesus said, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled" (**Matt 23:12**)
- And that message has never changed.
 - Oh, the stories that I could tell you of God humbling me in my pride.¹²

⁹ Webster's 1828

¹⁰ Inordinate: *excessive*.

¹¹ Conceit: *conception, idea, image*.

¹² From the "singing sensation" to the guy who puked on the girl's prom dress. From "basketball star" to sideline coach. From "piano pro" to the guy in a cast. From the pastor "with experience" to the guy struggling the most in seminary. From the "exciting" new pastor to the guy whose making involuntary bodily noises in the front pew. From the "rockstar" to the guy who can't remember the words to his own song.

○ I struggle with pride, and so I give God opportunities to humble me all the time.
Brother/sister, **the first message** in Obadiah is to check your heart:

- Are you standing on top of God's gifts in order to look down at those around you?
- Or are you using God's gifts to show the world how wonderful God is? ¹³

2. **Edom's violence** against God's people (10–16)

As we already mentioned, Edom did not care for the people of God.

- When God's people needed help, Edom refused.
- When God's people were under attack, Edom rejoiced.

More than once, they were in a position to support God's people, and (instead) they stood by and watched (with smug satisfaction) as God's people struggled and suffered.

- This is a serious thing.
- Edom is going down because of their refusal to care for God's people.

So, the question you and I need to be asking is, "**Who are God's people?**"

- Is it the Jews?
- Is it the nation of Israel?

Well, the answer we get in the NT is "**the church**"; the church is God's people.

- One of the greatest victories of Christ Jesus on the cross was that He made a way for every tribe and tongue and people and nation to become His people so that

“...you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female;
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

~ **Galatians 3:26–29**

On the cross, Jesus didn't just purchase Jews for God. The Bible says that He purchased “the church” with His blood (**Acts 20:28**). His redeemed people are the church.

So, the question then becomes: **how are you caring for the needs of the church?**

- Are you praying for its people? For your pastor? For your leaders & fellow members?

¹³ But be careful, church, because there is a **flip side to pride**. The other side of this coin called pride is when you think that **others** are **superior** to you (**above** you, **better than** you) for the same reasons: they have more muscles sticking out of their abdomen; they have more friends than you do; they make friends easier than you do; they're more gregarious or outgoing than you are; they have more opportunities than you; they have more degrees than you; they have more financial success than you... and so you feel **inferior** (lower than, lesser than) those around you.

That's just the other side of pride. On the one side, I lift myself up and push others down – with no thought for God. On the other side, I exalt others and push myself down – with no thought for God. Now, we may not call that “pride,” but (whatever you call it) it's part of the same root problem that places a certain value on yourself (whether a high value or a low value) with no thought for how God sees you.

Given that this can go both ways, I think one of the most helpful **definitions** of pride is “*looking at yourself instead of looking at God.*”

- How are you encouraging & supporting the people & the ministries in your local church?
- How are you using your time & your gifts & your resources to serve the church?
- Are you doing what you can to contribute to the financial needs of the church?

I read a statistic recently noting that the majority of church ministry is done by approximately **20%** of the congregation (both when it comes to servicing in the various ministries and when it comes to financial giving), and the other **80%** is primarily comprised of those who show up for the Sunday morning service.¹⁴

God isn't judging Edom primarily because of its active violence against His people – although that's part of it (**verse 14**). God is primarily judging Edom because it did nothing to help God's people in their time of need.

So, the implication in this passage is not simply regarding those who are actively against the church (or even those within the church who seem to find some sort of pleasure in being the church's biggest critique).¹⁵ The implication is for those of us who are content to sit on the sidelines.

May God make us a church that are actively and passionately and sacrificially invested into caring for the people of God – starting here in our own congregation, but then may He also give us hearts with a global trajectory. That we would be a church that is pursuing the wellbeing of God's people across the globe.

CONCLUSION

Like every prophetic message we have looked at so far, the message of Obadiah concludes with hope & glory for God's people.

But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance,
And there shall be holiness...
~ **Obadiah 17**

God is going to turn the tables on the suffering of His people.
One day, the promise is that God is going to deliver His people.

And Obadiah says that when that day of deliverance comes...

1. God will judge the enemies of His people
2. God will establish His kingdom over the kingdoms of this world.

Then deliverers (*saviors*) shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau
And the kingdom shall be the Lord's.
~ **Obadiah 21**

¹⁴ <https://www.ibelieve.com/faith/when-20-of-the-church-does-all-the-work.html>

¹⁵ There are some church-goers who seem to have a goal of being the church's biggest critic: they critique the music, the sermon, the temperature, the lighting, what people are wearing, the decorations...they'll find *something* to critique

As Christians, we believe that we are living in that promise today!
We believe that God has already begun to make this promise a reality...

- The Deliverer came to Mount Zion.¹⁶
- The promised Savior came 2,000 years ago to set His people free from the power of sin.¹⁷
- On the cross, He destroyed the power of the kingdoms of darkness.¹⁸
- And through His death and resurrection, Jesus established His kingdom over all the earth because He **IS** the King of kings and the Lord of Lords.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach, He told them,

As you go, preach, saying,
The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
~ **Matthew 10:7**

Several chapters later, Jesus was having a conversation with the Pharisees, and He said

“Surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”
~ **Matthew 12:28**

We don't serve the One who will be King *someday*.

We serve the One who is *right now*, at this very moment, the Sovereign King over all the earth.¹⁹

- And we are a people holy to the Lord.

APPLICATION

1. May God give us the grace to use the gifts He has given us for His glory
2. May God give us the grace to spend our lives making much of God – instead of trying to make much of ourselves.
3. May God give us the grace to love and care for His people, particularly within the local church.
4. May God fill us with hope & joy, knowing that He is King over all the earth, and we are His people.

PRAY

THE LORD'S TABLE

¹⁶ See also Isaiah 59:20; Joel 2:32; c.f., Romans 11:26.

¹⁷ Romans 6:18; 8:2.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:55–57.

¹⁹ Daniel 7:13–14; Matthew 10:7; 12:28; 28:18; Mark 9:1; Luke 10:9; John 12:15; 18:37; Philippians 2:9–11; 1 Timothy 6:13–15; Hebrews 1:3–4; Revelation 17:14.