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“Don’t Take Advantage of Others”

Obadiah

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In the shortest book of the Old Testament, Obadiah pronounced three indictments against the Edomites for their mistreatment of the Israelites. Pastor Gary explains the historical background behind the animosity between these two people groups, and he challenges us to not repeat the sins of the Edomites.

Historical Background

1. Nothing is known about Obadiah regarding his place of birth, who his parents were, when and where he lived, etc.
 - a. There are quite a few Obadiah's mentioned in the Bible, but this Obadiah is not any of those men.
 - b. His name means servant of Yahweh.
2. Obadiah's prophecy was directed entirely to the Edomites, who were the 'distant cousins,' so to speak, of the Israelites.
 - a. By all appearances, it seems to be the case that Obadiah made reference to the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem, which would make the timeframe 586 - 553 B.C.
 - b. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, who was the twin brother of Jacob, sons of Isaac and Rebekah.
3. Esau and Jacob
 - a. Isaac and Rebekah were the parents of Esau, the first born, and Jacob.
 - i. **Genesis 25:25** - *“And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.”*
 - ii. **Genesis 25:27b** - *“And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.”*
 - iii. Jacob was a man of the tents or what we might call a 'homebody.'

- iv. Pastor Gary shared a brief overview of the account of Jacob and Esau and the deceitful way Jacob obtained Esau's birthright as the firstborn.
 1. The firstborn son was entitled to a double inheritance, the paternal blessing of the father, and the firstborn son would then become the patriarch of the family.
 2. Pastor Gary said, "In a moment of fleshly desire [Esau] compromised a very sacred thing. There are many times in our lives when we will be confronted with what is valuable. Please do not trade it for something that is sinful. ... In the moment his hunger [and appetite] mastered [Esau]. [It was] not what was right but what was expedient. We get ourselves into deep trouble when we do what is expedient rather than what is right."
 - a. [Genesis 25:29-34](#) - *"Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.' Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, 'Sell me your birthright as of this day.' And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?' Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me as of this day.' So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."*
 3. God changed Jacob's name to Israel, so his descendants are called Israelites.
 4. [Genesis 27](#) tells the sordid story of Jacob's alliance with his mother, Rebekah, to deceive his father, Isaac, into giving him the birthright that he had obtained from Esau.
 5. Pastor Gary said, "Esau and Jacob eventually [made] amends but their descendants never [did], and for generation after generation the Edomites, particularly, [were] vindictive toward the Israelites. ... They were always doing something to take advantage of the Israelites. ... They continued to kick the Israelites when they were down. And God [said] enough! [So he sent] Obadiah to confront them."

God's Indictment Against The Edomites

4. [Obadiah v. 10](#) - *"For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever."*
5. The Edomites refused to help 'a brother in need.'

- a. **Obadiah 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."*
 - b. God charged the Edomites with what amounted to cheering from the sidelines instead of coming to their aid when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem.
 - c. Pastor Gary said, "Sometimes doing nothing is a great sin. Where you see a need or a problem and it is within your capacity to do something, to help, but you don't, God [will hold you] accountable. It's sin. ... God sees [these situations] and he holds us accountable. ... The sin is doing nothing!"
 - i. **Numbers 32:23** - *"But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and **be sure your sin will find you out.**"* (Emphasis added)
 - 1. This verse was part of Moses' challenge to the tribes of Reuben and Gad; if they didn't come to the aid of the ten tribes that crossed over to the west side of the Jordan River, they would be guilty of sinning against God.
 - ii. **James 4:17** - *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."*
6. The Edomites rejoiced over the Israelites' misfortune.
- a. **Obadiah v. 12** - *"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."*
 - b. God charged the Edomites with taking delight in the misfortune.
 - c. Pastor Gary said, "God despises cheering from the sidelines when someone we don't get along with falls on hard times. Is the Bible not accurate for our lives today? Some of you were like, 'Ouch!' ... All of us at some point are probably guilty of [this]. ... [Is there even the minutest celebration] over the misfortune of someone who has wronged you?"
 - d. **Proverbs 24:17-18** - *"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him."*
 - e. Job considered whether or not his troubles came upon him as a result of this kind of sin.
 - i. **Job 31:29-30** - *"If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted myself up when evil found him (indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for a curse on his soul)..."*
7. The Edomites resorted to selfish behavior and took advantage of the Israelites when they were down.

- a. **Obadiah vs. 13** - *“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.”*
- b. God charged the Edomites with looting and ransacking Jerusalem after the Babylonians had destroyed the city and taken captives away.

Obadiah’s Prophecy Was Fulfilled

8. **Obadiah v. 18** - *“ ‘The house of Jacob [Israelites] shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph [Israelites] a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,’ For the LORD has spoken.”*
9. Pastor Gary said, “The irony of all ironies is that in 70 A.D. when the Romans came against the Jews to subdue a Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire, the Edomites came to the aid of their Jewish brothers, but it was too little too late. Twenty thousand Edomites, the last of the Edomites, were encircled by the Romans... and they were all burned in the fire that the Romans laid to the city of Jerusalem. ... God is faithful to his promises; even the hard stuff.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Obadiah v. 1-15** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of the background of the conflict between Jacob and Esau and the ongoing conflict between their descendants. (See #2 through #3 above)
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they’ve yielded to the temptation to ‘cheer from the sidelines’ when someone who has ‘done them wrong’ has suffered. (See #5 above)
4. Read and discuss **Numbers 32:23**, making sure to put the verse in context with Moses’ challenge to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and recognizing that there is application for us today. (See #5c above)
5. Read and discuss **James 4:17**. (See #5c above)
6. Read and discuss **Proverbs 24:17-18** and **Job 31:29-30**. (See #6 above)
7. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)