

Obadiah sermon
Rose Hill PC

Tyler Easley
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When looking at OT prophet, super important to understand historical context.
So first context...what's going on here?

Context: Edom, a nation adjacent to Israel/Judah, aided and abetted Babylon, Israel's enemy, by helping Babylonian forces capture Jews as they fled Babylonian invasion.

So why is this a big deal? **Back-story:** Edomites are descendants of Esau, of Jacob and Esau fame. Gen. 25-27. Twin boys born to Isaac and Rebekah. The Lord chose Jacob/Israel to be covenant partner, but Esau/Edom was "part of the family." Related.

So Israelites getting hammered by Babylonians, Edom/Esau/kin sided w the oppressor. Obadiah expresses God's judgment on Edom, specifically their prideful hardness of heart toward Israel. Key: Edom - like historical brother Esau - cared not re the things/purposes of God. Remember, sold his birthright for some oatmeal. Esau/Edom = symbolizes spiritual obtuseness, unwillingness to support God's work.

First, we never want to be found opposing the purposes of God. Or put positively, we want to always be striving to sync-up with the purposes of God. It was Edom's pride that caused them to not assist God's people and so incur God's judgment.

Cf Acts 5:33-39...some disciples arrested...Jewish relig leaders furious w them & wanted to kill them. And we read this..

When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred,

joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. **You might even be found opposing God!**"

So we want to be folks - and be a church community - that always asking: What is God doing here? What is God up to? Winning questions to ask, always.

***2017 marked the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther posting his 95 Theses on door of church of Wittenburg. Lots of Luther and Reformation stuff out there. Highly rec Eric Metaxes' bio of Luther. Tell Luther story. What stuck me tho, in refamiliarizing myself w the Luther story, is how the RC leadership missed a great opportunity. Remember, Luther had no desire to "start a new church." He was a monk and Biblical scholar who wanted to reform the church of his day by the NT. Now, we can totally understand the institutional reaction against a reformer, right?

But what if the Church had said - Yes, this Luther is rocking the boat, but let's prayerfully listen, let's dust off our NTs listen to his arguments. More Gamaliel-like.

Imagine if the Church had said "You know, Luther has a valid argument." Or I should say, what if they said this at the time. Because THEY DID SAY IT 450 YEARS LATER. To oversimplify, the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s was the RC Church basically saying "You know, Luther was right." (A Mighty Fortress is in RC hymnal today!)

How much division and suffering would the world (esp Western Europe) have been spared if RC leadership had taken the Gamaliel approach: What if God is at work here?

We want to be people who are always asking the question: What is GOD doing? We don't want to be so set in our ways/thinking that we miss the movement of

God's Spirit. Edom missed the purposes of God being worked out thru Israel. All they could see were their ancient animosities.

And second, and really at the heart of our Obadiah text and the heart of my first point, the spiritually destructive power of pride.

"The pride of your heart has deceived you", the Lord said to Edom. Interesting phrase - as if we can do something to ourself - harbor a prideful heart - that then ruins our ability to discern God's purposes.

Do a word search of the Bible on pride and it comes up everywhere, and it's rarely a good thing. From "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov 16:18) to "For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world." (I Jn 2:16) pride is seen as a kind of spiritual rot that's the opposite of the humble, trusting way of Jesus and his followers.

Pride essentially replaces God w Self - pride says "I've got this". Pride says "God helps those who help themselves." Pride says "My will be done." Pride says "Sure, they're our kin, but isn't it kind of fun to see "the chosen ones" getting trashed by the Babylonians?" Pride misses the purposes of God.

***Big fan of general and president US Grant. Two very good bios: Chenow & White. Humility, modesty. Many generals quite pompous - elab uniforms. Grant always wore basic soldiers jacket, w stars for rank. One story I like - after Civil War, Pres Johnson sent Grant to South to get status report. Grant said "all good." Johnson also sent another official south - his report was far more pessimistic (South knew they lost war but weren't about to kowtow to Federal Gov't anytime soon. Which was accurate.) Grant asked to read.."You are right, and I am wrong." This from Gen who won the war!

"The pride of your heart has deceived you", the Lord said to Edom. "The pride of your heart has deceived you". We want to be people who discern the movement of God's Spirit. We want to sync up w what God is doing in our lives and communities. Step One in that process is setting aside our giant egos and humbly saying "Thy will be done."