

The Punishment of a Privileged People

by Aaron Dunlop

The sermon highlights the punishment of a privileged people, specifically Edom, for their sin of pride, which is insurgence against God and independence from God.

Duration: 39:12

Scripture: Isaiah 21:11-12, Jeremiah 49:7-22, Ezekiel 25:12-14, Amos 1:11-12, Amos 2:14-16, Obadiah 1:1-4, Zechariah 2:3

Topics: "Punishment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the intensity of the message of punishment on a privileged people who have heard and rejected the Gospel. The book of Obadiah, with its brevity and clear language, serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of turning away from God. The preacher urges the audience to examine their hearts and truly accept the Gospel, rather than relying on intellectual knowledge alone. The sermon also highlights the concept of the day of the Lord, a strong warning against an ungodly world and the futility of human efforts to save oneself.

Transcript

I've read the whole book of Obadiah tonight, and I intend to, as we go through this series, it is good to read, if you're doing any study in any book, it is good to read it through numerous times to get a flow, to get the feel for the book in its entirety, to get the overall picture. It is also good to read aloud. If you're doing a study on any verse or passage of Scripture, it is good to read aloud and get the feel and hear the words that you're studying.

It's one thing reading it to yourself, but to read it aloud and to hear it back in your ears is an added dimension that is very good in the study of Scripture. As I said, I want to look at the first couple of lines of this prophecy. The vision of Obadiah, thus saith the Lord concerning Edom.

We looked last week at the subject of Edom and the day when the Lord has his day. We concluded that message with the identity of the messenger, Obadiah. He is very obscure.

He does not identify himself, but for his name. He does not give his father's name, which identifies his heritage, his lineage, and is often used as a surname. He does not identify which kings he prophesied under, as many of the other prophets did.

He does not identify who he was or what he did. So we looked at his identity, the identity of the messenger, and we saw, first of all, that he is hidden behind his commission. We made the point at that time that this man had such an important commission and such is the meaning of his name, which means servant or worshiper of Jehovah, that his commission was paramount.

He did not waste words. The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord.

He was hidden behind his commission. Not only was he hidden behind his commission, as we saw the last time, but he was hidden behind his message. He is simple in language, manifold in meaning, few in words, abundant in thought, according to that the wise man is known by the fewness of his words.

One commentator in the 11th century wrote, What I want to look at tonight, after having identified the identity of the messenger, I want us to look tonight at the intensity of the message. As an overview of the book, the intensity of the message. He is intense in his message on a number of different levels.

The condemnation of Edom was clear, as we have seen from the beginning. He saw, as we looked at in the whole of scripture, we span both the Old and the New Testament, and we saw in the New Testament that he stumbled at the word because he was disobedient. He sold his birthright.

And we went back into the book of Genesis, chapter 25, and we saw how he despised his birthright. He sold it to his brother. And by that, we saw this animosity, this hatred between Jacob and Esau that was going to continue between the two brothers throughout their generations.

And so we saw that this animosity, and therefore the condemnation on Edom, was there from the beginning. If we look deeper into the life of Edom as a nation, the more we see that the Edomites became the personification of godless malignity and pride. They were the personification of pride and godlessness.

And we proved last week that this prophecy on Edom is indeed not only a prophecy on this little nation, but it is a prophecy on the heathen of the world. Verse 15, for instance, For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen. Edom became the personification of all ungodliness, and it signified and symbolized throughout the scriptures the entire heathen ungodly world, just as his brother Israel signified the Christian church throughout the scriptures.

Edom signified heathenism. The purpose of Esau at the beginning of murdering Jacob would become the obsessive intent of the Edomites for the nation of Israel. They would not be satisfied until Israel was exterminated.

They had an envious hatred for the children of God and the God of Israel. And it is this hatred of God that Esau represents and Edom represents the nations with remarkable lucidity. The fate of heathenism then, as we saw last time, is bound up in the fate of Edom.

This is a general but a crucial observation in order to properly understand and in order to properly interpret the book of Obadiah. And so while the message of Obadiah might apply specifically and historically to a nation in the mountains of Seir, the message is for heathens for all of time. That's important.

While this book in its historical context speaks to a nation, a small nation, at the south end of the Dead Sea, its message is for heathenism to the end of time. But more sensitive, again as we look at this book, more sensitive than that, we see that as we look to this book there is a very tender nerve indeed, which identifies another category of people upon whom the destruction of eternal punishment rests. Those who

have known the privilege of the covenant blessings of God and spurned them.

We are going to see that tonight. Those who have known the privilege of the covenant blessings and promises of God and spurned them, turned away and rejected them. This is Edom.

What we are looking at tonight is the punishment of a privileged people. There are four other prophecies or oracles regarding Edom in the Old Testament. They are found in Amos chapter 1 verses 11 and 12, Isaiah chapter 21 verses 11 and 12, Jeremiah 49 verses 7 to 22 and Ezekiel 25 verses 12 to 14.

There are no elements common to all. But we will be looking, and as we look at the other prophecies, you will see that there are elements, that all of the elements that are mentioned in the other prophecies converge in Obadiah. They converge in Obadiah.

Prominent in the prophecies of Amos, Ezekiel and Obadiah is the fact that Edom had harbored such a vengeful spite against Israel. Particularly so since Edom and Israel were brothers. And that spite and that vengeful spirit against Israel was so intense and so destructive, particularly because they were so closely knit as brothers.

Obadiah then deals in his prophecy with the judgment of God on the Edomites, as a specially and particularly privileged people. And his terse dealings in 21 verses adds emphasis to his message. As I said, he does not multiply words.

He speaks clearly. He speaks pointedly to a people who ought to have known better. The brevity of this book speaks to its intensity.

And apart from the brevity of the message, there are three other aspects that I want us to pick up on tonight in these 21 verses, three other aspects of this prophecy that highlight the intensity of the message. And the intensity of a message, hear me? The intensity of a message of punishment on a privileged people. Three aspects in this little book of 21 verses that intensifies the punishment of God on a people who have heard the gospel, on a people who know the gospel intellectually, and on a people who have rejected the gospel spiritually.

These three aspects are applicable to every individual who sits under the sound of the gospel and turns from it unaffected and still entertaining in their hearts a hostility and an indifference to the things of God. I want you to hear what Obadiah has to say tonight. As I said this morning, we are living in the end of the end times.

Deception is rife. The Bible says that if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived. And I am under no illusions, and I have said it before and I will say it again, that as I preach the gospel to any congregation, I do never assume that all my hearers are believers.

Never. We are told continually to examine ourselves, to see if we are in the field. And I don't care how much you know the gospel, and I don't care what your intellectual acumen is concerning the things of scripture, I want you tonight to think of the privilege that you have, as you sit in a Christian country, so-called, in a Christian meeting, hearing the gospel, and ask yourself, have you in your heart and in your spirit accepted the gospel? I'm not talking about your head.

I'm not talking about what you know intellectually. I'm talking about your heart. First thing I want us to notice tonight, regarding the intensity of this message, is the relationship that is emphasized.

The relationship that is emphasized. It is the highest possible privilege. The highest possible privilege.

The main body of the prophecy of Obadiah is against the Edomites, is unambiguous as to the nature of the relationship between Israel and Edom. He makes no bones about it. He is clear, and he clearly states that they are brothers.

That they had this relationship to Israel, God's peculiar, particular, chosen people. They were not distant cousins. They were brothers.

And what's more, to add intensity to that, they were twin brothers. They were from the same father and the same mother. There is no closer relationship than what Edom had to Israel.

Here were a people who then had all the covenant privileges in Esau, and yet are reprobate. That's a striking thought. Here were a people who had all the promises of a covenant people, in their father, in their patriarch Esau, and yet they are reprobate.

The privileges of the seed of Abraham were many and varied. We could go through the Old Testament and give you the privileges that Esau had in Abraham, in his father Abraham, in the promises that God gave Abraham and Isaac. And we'd have given to Esau, only Esau rejected them.

That's a striking thought. That Esau is within the broad covenant family, under the broad blessings and promises of Abraham. It would not be true to say that the Edomites were the covenant people of God.

Because as we know, the promises were given to Abraham, they were reiterated to Isaac, and they were reiterated to Jacob specifically, having left Esau off. So it would not be true to say that Edom was the covenant people of God. Yet it is not without significance that the seal of the covenant made with their father Abraham was given to Esau and to the Edomites.

Abraham was told to circumcise all the male children in his house as a sign of the covenant that God made with his people. He did that. Isaac was told to do the same, and so closely knit together was the sign of the covenant and the covenant itself, that to be without the sign was to be without the covenant.

So closely knit were they by God in the Old Testament. And so the point I want us to see tonight is that Esau, as a child of Abraham and Isaac, had on his body the sign of the covenant of God. He carried with him a continual reminder, a continual reminder, although it had been blurred by time and the innate corruption of humanity, he had on his body a continual reminder that God had condescended to relate to men.

And he rejected all of those covenant promises and blessings. He turned from them. He spurned them.

Deuteronomy chapter 2, God, as we have seen previous weeks, God had protected the Edomites. He told the Israelites as they were going up through the King's Highway, on their way through Edom, they were not to pillage the land of Edom. In fact, as they went through, they were to buy their very bread, they were to buy their very water to survive.

They were not to accept anything free from Edom. Edom was protected by God. In Deuteronomy chapter 23, verses 7 to 9, the Edomites are further privileged when God commands the Israelites not to despise the Edomites.

Why? Because God says they are your brother. They are your brother. They were not to despise the Edomites.

God made a special identity with these people, the Edomites, because they were the brother of Israel. That is significant. They were to permit them into the covenant.

That is, if an Edomite had come to be part of Israel, and accepted the true worship of the true God, Israel were to receive them. They were to treat them right. They were not to despise them as on the day of salvation.

My friend, the point I want to make tonight is that Edom was a privileged nation. Next to Israel itself, there was not a more privileged nation in all of the Old Testament. The relationship that is emphasized.

Verse 10. For the violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee. This, my friend, was the highest possible privilege that God gave to Edom.

Secondly, there is the sin that is exhibited. It is the worst possible sin. Verse 3. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.

Now, these things that I am picking up on run throughout the entire book. The fact that he is a brother of Israel runs throughout the entire book. The fact that the sin of pride is the sin for which they are judged runs throughout the entire book.

Pride is here epitomized as the sin that sank the Edomites. I say it is the worst possible sin because this in many ways is the sin that defines sin. Pride.

It is the epitome of sin. And all the sin of the Edomites is summed up in this one sin. All their sin against Israel and all their sin against God flowed from this sin of pride.

And the heinousness of this sin is seen in the very fact that it is against. It is against the privilege of knowing the word of God and against light. Against light.

That makes it all the more heinous. The fact that they are sinning against privilege, which we have already seen. The sin of pride is exacerbated by the fact that they are sinning against privilege and knowledge and light.

The sin of pride is the sin in relation to the Edomites against the closest of human relations and the dearest of spiritual privileges. It is therefore a sin against God. And what Edomites are accused of throughout this book is accused of the sin of being proud against Jacob and being vindictive and hurtful and spiteful against Jacob.

That is what they are accused of. That is what they are going to be judged for. That is what they are going to personify the entire Edomites for.

Their hatred and their work against Jacob. But my friend, the fact remains, as the Lord said in Matthew chapter 25 verse 44. When he is speaking about casting them out into outer darkness and they say, answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee in hunger or thirst or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Now if that is true in that sense where we don't do good to God's people, we don't do good to God. It is true in the contrary when we do ill to God's people. We do ill to God and we do well to remember that.

God's people are hurt and you hurt one of God's people. You are doing ill against God. And Edom here had sinned against Israel.

They had sinned against Jacob. They had sinned against their brother. They had therefore sinned against God.

They had sinned against God in their arrogance and pride. The pride of their heart had deceived them. Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, that sayeth in thine heart, who shall bring me down to the ground? There Edom sat in Mount Seir, in the rocky hills of Seir.

They thought there was nobody could conquer them. They thought they were safe. They thought God could not even touch them.

They said in their arrogance and pride, who shall bring us down to the ground? This arrogance and pride, the sin of pride, is a sin, first of all, of insurgence against God. It is the sin of insurgence against God. My friend, as you were born in sin and shame and iniquity, and as you grow, and as we see children grow, they get, you see that sinful nature coming out in them very early in years.

Before long, when they have a mind of their own, and they get up in years and they can make decisions of their own, we see that they are not only against their parents, but they are against God. Against God. And pride in its essence is insurgence against God.

This is the primary source and the root of all sin. It is against God. It was pride that precipitated the fall of Satan and his angels.

In Isaiah chapter 14 verses 12 to 15, the language that is used is similar to that used of Edom. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground, which did reckon the nations? For thou hast said in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north.

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

That is God's word against Satan. You parallel that with God's word against Edom. And there is a striking similarity.

Why? Because the sin of Satan, the sin of Lucifer, is played out in every unbeliever. The sin of pride and arrogance and insurgence against God is played out and acted out in every unbeliever who defies God. This insurgence against God, Edom was guilty of.

So Bediah tells us, Verse 4. Though thou exalt thyself as an eagle, though thou set thy nest among the stars, hence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord. The sin that is exhibited is the worst possible sin because it is insurgence against God. Not only is it insurgence against God, but the sin of pride is independence from God.

Independence from God. Now believer, you may think you've got off tonight and I'm not going to touch on you. But here, here, in our independence from God, we see that pride rises up in the hearts of God's

people himself.

Pride is here characterized in Obadiah as self-sufficiency. Though thou say in thine heart, who shall bring me down to the ground? Self-sufficiency. They were self-sufficient.

They thought that no one could touch them. That trait in humanity, that indifference to the things of God and His sovereignty over all our actions, is pride and independence from God. This is what Edom had done to the Lord.

They had left Him out of their reckoning. In the words of Israel's only ever woman Prime Minister, in the 1970s, Golda Meir said, We only want that which is given naturally to all the peoples of the world, to be masters of our own fate. Next to Frank Sinatra's song, I did it my way.

It's not another humanistic statement than Golda Meir's statement in the early 70s. To be masters of our own fate. This independence from God is clearly seen in Esau throughout his life, and then furthered in the nation of which he was a patriarch.

They thought themselves to be beyond the reach of God. Hebrews 12 verse 16 Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. There is a New Testament description of Esau.

A profane person. The word profane gets to the very heart of the problem here. And gets to the very core of the sin for which Edom is going to be judged.

Esau, in other words, lacked the respect for spiritual reality. He sold it to his brother Jacob. He had no respect for eternal things.

He had no respect for spiritual things. He was, in other words, a person consumed with secular ideas. Independent from God.

He was a man devoted, if I can put it this way, he was a man devoted to the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world. The spirit of the age.

He had no time, no thought for the spiritual condition of the soul, and he was completely indifferent to the things of God. He was, in essence, living without God. Why? Because the sin of pride is the sin of independence from God.

The fool has said in his heart, as we saw a few weeks ago, no God for me. That's pride. That's arrogance.

My friend, that is the sin that will damn you in hell for all eternity. My friend, this is the sin that is exhibited in this intense message of Obadiah. The sin that epitomizes all sin.

The sin that is found in every heart. Pride comes in many and varied forms. And pride is the most deceiving of all sins.

We need to be careful. We need to be careful that as Christians, as God's people, that the pride of our hearts does not deceive us. Does not deceive us.

But humble ourselves before God in humble recognition of the God of Heaven and His sovereignty and His control over us as individuals. Not only is the intensity of the message seen in the relationship that is

emphasized, the sin that is exhibited, but it is seen in the language that is employed. It is the strongest possible language.

The strongest possible language. The language that is employed. The prophet here speaks in unequivocal terms.

He does not... He does not bandy with words. There is no uncertainty as to the message Adam is to get from this prophecy that Obadiah is giving to it. Verse 4. They are going to be brought down.

They are going to be brought down. Verse 7. Those with whom they had fought and who were their allies are going to turn against them. And they are going to give them a mortal wound.

Verse 9. They are going to be cut off with a slaughter. So like this prophecy, we could go on and multiply the different language that Obadiah uses to get the point across to Edom. That they are going to suffer an utter destruction.

But all of these images of disaster brought into view before the Edomites culminates in verse 15 with the phrase, The day of the Lord. The day of the Lord. This is one phrase that encapsulates the doom on the ungodly world.

This one phrase encapsulates the doom on an ungodly world. The day of the Lord. It's one of the central themes of prophecy in the Old Testament.

It was, to put it simply, a period of time when the Lord would break into time. When the Lord who is eternal would break into time in a very definite manner and for a very decisive action against sin. Very specifically, every judgment of God was not known as the day of the Lord.

Every destruction on a nation was not referred to as the day of the Lord. The point I want to make in saying that is that when the Lord speaks of His day, He is speaking very specifically when He will enter into time with a very definite purpose. This term is not speaking of the normal providences of God against sin.

It's no ordinary day. No ordinary day. This is the language that Obadiah employs and it is the strongest possible language.

Let me take you through the Prophets and give you an idea. In Joel 1.15, it's referred to as the destruction of the Almighty. In Amos 4.13, the visitation from the Lord of hosts.

In Joel 2.2, it is a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of thick clouds and thick darkness. In Amos 5.20, it is a day of darkness and not light. In Zechariah 2.3, it is the day of the Lord's anger.

I could go on through the Prophets. I could go on all night in speaking of this one concept, the day of the Lord, because it is the strongest possible language against an ungodly world. Amos 2.14-16 paints a very vivid picture of utter helplessness on the part of man to save himself from this day of the Lord.

We read there, therefore, the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself. The strong, or the flight, shall perish from the swift. Those who are known for their swiftness in departure will be consumed without opportunity.

Those who are known for their strength will be consumed as though they were weak. Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow, and he that is swift on foot shall not deliver himself, neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself, and he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord. Here, Amos takes all the pictures of strength and military prowess, and he brings them together in one broad picture.

He puts them all together, and he blows on them. He says, all of your strength, all of your military prowess, your swiftness, your might, will be as nothing on the day of the Lord. Joel's description of irresistible destruction is equally as candid as Amos.

Joel 2, verse 3, The fire devoureth before them, and behind them the flame burneth. The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness, yea, nothing shall escape them. You get the picture? Before them, a garden of Eden, paradise.

And as the day of the Lord comes by, behind them, a desolate wilderness. This, my friend, these terrible descriptions are of the day of the Lord. But the real sting, the real sting, unbeliever, the real sting in the day of the Lord, and the prophecies of the day of the Lord in the Old Testament, is found in verse 15 of Obadiah.

For the day of the Lord is near, is near, it is imminent. That, my friend, is the sting that comes in the fact that this day is imminent, it's near. This, my friend, is the key characteristic of the day of the Lord.

This phrase is an indication then that the Lord, when the Lord has His day, the time of opportunity is gone. When the Lord has His day, the day of grace has expired. When the Lord has His day, there will be no opportunity for repentance.

All hope is gone. As He overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked from the burning, Amos chapter 4 verses 11 and 12 tells us, I have overthrown some of you as the Lord overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore, he says, I have overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah, I have given you warning, and ye have not returned unto me.

I have preached to you, and I have warned you of the flames of hell, and I have told you of the drawings of heaven, and exhorted you to accept Christ as your Saviour. And as Amos said, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore, this will I do unto them, O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

Prepare to meet thy God. That phrase, my friend, is not an opportunity to get ready spiritually to meet God. That phrase, prepare to meet thy God, signifies and intensifies the imminency of the return of God.

Ye have not returned unto me, therefore, here comes the day of the Lord and destruction. The strongest possible language intensifies the message of Obadiah against Adam and intensifies the message of the gospel ministry against those who are unbelievers in this world, in this city, and those who are unbelievers in this meeting. My friend, there is not stronger language.

There is not a greater privilege. And you have tonight in hearing the gospel, and if you rejected, there is not a worse sin than rejecting the conviction and the convincing of the Spirit of God. Obadiah's message to Adam is a message of punishment for a privileged people.

Let's bow in prayer.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/17/SID17098.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aaron-dunlop/the-punishment-of-a-privileged-people/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net