

Pride Will Bring You Down

A Three-Week Series Through the Book of Obadiah

Why Obadiah?

If you've never read the book of Obadiah, you are not alone. At just 21 verses, it's the shortest book in the Old Testament (440 words in Hebrew). You can read the whole thing in a few minutes (3:31 if you want to hear Max McLean narrate it on BibleGateway*). It's a prophecy directed at Edom, a nation most of us have never thought about, over a family conflict between two brothers who lived roughly 4,000 years ago. It would be easy to flip past it and think, "This doesn't have anything to do with me."

And that reaction, the reaction to dismiss what we think doesn't matter, is often a symptom of pride. This is the very thing Obadiah is about.

C.S. Lewis once wrote that pride is the one vice every person has, that everyone recognizes and despises in others, and that almost no one believes they are guilty of themselves. That's what makes it so dangerous. Pride isn't the sin you see coming. It's the sin that convinces you it's someone else's problem.

That's exactly what happened to Edom. Descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother, the Edomites lived in the mountain strongholds south of the Dead Sea (elevated, fortified, untouchable). When their brother nation Judah was invaded and Jerusalem fell, Edom didn't lift a finger to help. Instead, they watched. They gloated. They looted. They cut off the survivors trying to escape. And from the safety of their cliffs, they asked the question pride always asks: "Who will bring me down?"

God's answer was direct: "I will."

Pride didn't turn Edom into monsters. It did something worse, it made them indifferent. It convinced them that their brother's suffering had nothing to do with them. And God called that indifference violence.

So why study Obadiah? Why spend three weeks in a book most of us skip or skim over? Because in the shortest book of the Old Testament, God gave us one of the sharpest pictures of pride anywhere in Scripture. We'll see what pride looks like, where it leads, and how He responds to it. And He put it in a book small enough that we might pass right over it. Which, if we're honest, is exactly what pride would have us do.

About the Prophet

We know almost nothing about the man who wrote this book. The name Obadiah means “servant of the LORD” or “worshiper of Yahweh,” and it was one of the most common names in the Old Testament. There are about a dozen different men named Obadiah scattered across Scripture, and none of them can be confidently identified as the prophet.

The most commonly suggested candidate is the Obadiah in 1 Kings 18, the palace administrator under King Ahab who hid 100 prophets in caves to protect them from Jezebel. It’s an attractive connection, but there’s no textual evidence linking the two, and depending on when the book was written, the timeline may not work.

What we’re left with is a man whose entire identity in Scripture is his message. No tribe. No hometown. No father’s name. No personal story. The book doesn’t even include the standard prophetic introduction (no “the word of the LORD came to Obadiah son of...”) It just opens with “The vision of Obadiah.”

That seems fitting. The man who delivered God’s sharpest rebuke of pride is himself almost invisible. His name means “servant of the LORD,” and that’s all we know about him. For a book about the danger of making too much of yourself, the author made almost nothing of himself.

About Edom

Edom was the nation descended from Esau, Jacob’s twin brother (Genesis 25:30, 36:1). The two nations weren’t allies, they were family. Deuteronomy 23:7 actually commands Israel, “You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.” That kinship obligation is what makes Edom’s betrayal in Obadiah so devastating. This isn’t a foreign empire acting in its own interest, this is a brother who watched his brother be attacked and then picked his pockets while he was down.

The Edomites inhabited the mountainous region of Seir, south and east of the Dead Sea, with their strongholds carved into the sandstone cliffs. That geography fed their pride. They were literally elevated, fortified by terrain, and difficult to reach.

The name Edom itself means “red,” and it shares a Hebrew root with Adam (man) and adamah (ground). Adam, Edom, mankind — they are all linguistically connected through the root *aleph-dalet-mem* (’dm), which carries the meaning of “red.” Adam was the red (ruddy) man formed from the red (clay) ground. Esau was described as red at birth and was named Edom after trading his birthright for red stew. The connection isn’t accidental. When Obadiah pronounces judgment on Edom, there is a layer beneath the geopolitics: this is the story of Adam, of humanity, and what happens when we choose pride and self-sufficiency over trust in God. In Hebrew, Edom is another way of spelling what we all are.

The Anatomy of Pride: An Outline of Obadiah

The book of Obadiah traces the progression of pride and closes with a vision of God's kingdom that outlasts it all.

Part 1: The Pride of False Security (vv. 1–9)

“Who Will Bring Me Down?” (May 17)

Edom trusted in their geography; the cliffs, the elevation, the seemingly impenetrable position. Verse 3 captures their self-deception: “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’” God’s response is swift: “Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down.” Pride blinds. Edom couldn’t see their own vulnerability because they were so proud of the security of their position.

Part 2: The Pride of Contempt (vv. 10–14)

“You Should Not Have” (May 24)

Pride moves from posture to action. The charge is “violence done to your brother Jacob,” and Obadiah catalogs the offenses in devastating detail. The repeated phrase “do not” found over and over and over in vv. 12–14 reads like a sentencing hearing. Edom’s sins were largely sins of opportunity. They didn’t plan Jerusalem’s destruction, that was Babylon. But when the door was open, Edom walked through it.

Part 3: The Pride God Overturns (vv. 15–21)

“The Kingdom Shall Be the Lord’s” — May 31

The Day of the Lord is near “upon all the nations.” This is no longer about Edom alone. “As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.” But the prophecy doesn’t end with judgment, it ends with hope and promise. The mountain stronghold of Edom will fall, but Mount Zion will stand. And the final line delivers the thesis of the entire book: “The kingdom shall be the LORD’s.” Pride will be brought down because pride isn’t simply an attitude or wrong way of thinking, it’s a rebellious kingdom that has set itself in opposition to the true King. Obadiah’s final word is that there is only one kingdom that endures. The fall of pride and the rise of God’s kingdom are the same event.

Preparing for This Series

Read Obadiah — the whole thing. It takes two minutes. Then consider these additional resources as you prepare your heart for what God might say to you through this series:

Daniel 4 — The story of Nebuchadnezzar, another leader who stood on top of his kingdom and asked the same question Edom asked. His story ends differently — with repentance and restoration.

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Chapter 8: “The Great Sin” — One of the best short essays on pride ever written. If you have a copy, read it this week. *Note: If you don’t have access to a copy and would like one, email Brandon (Brandon@collegparkva.com) and we’ll send you an access code to get your own copy (paperback, digital, or audio).*

Andrew Murray, *Humility* — A short, powerful classic available free online. Murray traces humility through the life of Christ in twelve brief chapters.

Key Scriptures on Pride: Proverbs 16:18, James 4:6–10, Philippians 2:3–8

* Go to biblegateway.com, type in your reference and translation, click the speaker icon, and hear Max McLean read the text.