

Intro: You will most likely hear many stories today of bravery and brotherhood as we remember that tragic and evil day when the hearts of men like us were overcome by evil desires and violently destroyed the lives of thousands of our fellow Americans. The stories will emphasize the strength of unity, the bond of brotherhood, and the valor of the American people whom stepped forward to serve, to protect, to rescue, and to come to the aid of our fellow man. We should rejoice in their service, delight in their bravery, and remember their sacrifices, not because these saviors are ultimate, but because their humble help of their brothers reflect that for whom they were created.

Ironically, or possibly by a more complex origin, our study of the Minor Prophets bring us on this day of remembrance to the book of Obadiah. It is a unique book on two counts: it is the shortest book in the Old Testament, with only 21 verses, and it is an oracle written not to Israel or to Judah, but to Edom, one of Israel's neighbors. This timing is interesting because Edom is accused by the Lord through the prophet Obadiah for NOT helping his brother, for not serving or saving him, but for the opposite: standing by while the enemy destroyed, for looking down on his brother with disdain, and for looting his wealth and gaining in power at the expense of the one whom he should have loved. Edom failed with the failure of Cain who denied being his brother's keeper, and for that both were judged by God.

Before we get into the content of this brief proclamation, let us take a look at Edom so that we know the background which called forth the difficult Word of God.

1. Edom's History:

- a. Name means "Red"
 - i. either because of the red cliffs of the region
 - ii. or because Edom was started by Esau (Gen 36), who had red hair and sold his birthright for red lentil stew
 - iii. I'm of the opinion it has to do with Esau's hair, as the progenitor, and the red cliffs of the country
- b. Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, thus the nations of Israel and Edom should have related like brothers, and Israel was commanded not to hate Edomite for they were brothers (Deut 23:7), yet they were far from it (as Esau and Jacob were for most of their lives)
 - i. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he asked the king of Edom if they could pass through on "the King's Highway" as they headed to Canaan. They were rejected.
 - ii. Not only were they turned down, but they were threatened, even when Moses said they would pay for the resources which they took (water), the king of Edom brought out his army and set it up on his borders so that the Israelites had to march around to the east.(Num 20:14-21)
- c. Edom also caught stragglers of Israel trying to escape the destroying armies of Babylon, rounded the Israelite refugees up, and handed them back over to Babylon or killed them (Ezek 35?)
- d. David subjugated Edom, even killing all the men of the land (2 Sam 8; 1 Kings 11)

2. Edom's Pride

- a. Location and Geography
 - i. Sela = Petra
 - ii. Captial city and defense of Edom
 - iii. current ruins are Byzantine, not Edomite
 - iv. you who live in the clefts of "Sela" (v3)

- v. The canyons surrounding Sela have walls as high as 500 ft and in some places are so narrow that only one or two men can pass through at once, leading some to claim that a dozen men could defend it against an entire army
 - vi. This defensible position became their security and their pride from which they "looked down" upon others.
- b. Economy
- i. Edom was an extremely rough terrain through which two major trade highways ran through, the King's Highway, and the Wilderness Way
 - ii. by controlling these "crossroads" of trade, Edom built wealth and power through trading merchandise and charging for entrance through their city
 - iii. in fact, Edom fell because the Nabataens were their trade partners and had access into the city. The Nabataens betrayed Edom and destroyed the city from the inside(see v7)

3. Edom's Sin: Unbrotherliness

- a. Edom is held accountable by God for being unbrotherly by rejoicing in Israel's destruction and delighting in their fall (v10-14)
 - i. A progression toward "violence" (v10)
 - 1. "stood aloof" (v11)
 - a. Edom didn't "bother" itself with Israel's needs
 - b. Self-concern overweighed any concern or thought toward its brother when enemies came to overthrow it
 - c. They acted like an enemy toward their brother
 - 2. "gloated" (v12)
 - a. "that's their bed, they should lie in it"
 - b. Compassionless and proud, rather than moving toward redemption/salvation
 - 3. "rejoiced at their destruction"
 - a. Worse than merely standing aloof, this is joy in the downfall of someone else
 - b. There is a sense in which we do this when somebody fails or loses, a silent smile when an embittered brother "gets what he deserves"
 - 4. "cut off those who flee" and "handed over survivors"
 - a. They eventually entered the gates of Israel's cities as enemies, to loot them and steal from them
 - b. They acted like an enemy and openly abused the Israelites
 - c. They stood "at the crossroads" (as many stragglers as they could find) and cut down those who fled from the cities with bloodshed and violence toward them
 - d. They even handed over those whom they caught to the enemies of Israel
 - ii. Edom acted like Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?"
- b. Unlike Cain, who came against his brother with violence like an enemy, we are called to be our brother's keeper.
 - i. "Am I my brother's keeper?" is a proud, hateful, phrase
- c. The familial relationship is extremely important to God. This is not necessarily true in our culture today, to the point that "unbrotherliness" does not strike the same sense of disdain in our ears like the sins of murder, adultery, selfishness, etc.
 - i. Yet, Paul tells Timothy that those who do not love their family in such a way as to provide for them has "denied the faith" and "is worse than an unbeliever"!! Ouch! (1 Tim 5:8)

1. How can this be? How does one deny the faith by being unbrotherly?
2. Simple: When one does not offer grace, it shows that one denies the grace given to them. Similar to the unmerciful servant of Matt 18, who being shown mercy by the King for an astronomical debt, proceeded to choke the one who owed him a much smaller debt. When one doesn't show mercy, it shows that they have denied the mercy shown to them.

4. We Have a King Who is His Brother's Keeper

- a. Hebrews 2:9-10
 - i. tells us that Jesus suffered in order to bring "many sons to glory", and that it was fitting for the Creator to be made to suffer as the foundation of their salvation
 - ii. Jesus suffered as our brother so that He might bring us to glory
 3. He became His brother's keeper by being made "for a little while" lower than the angels, exchanging His crown of power for one of death!
- b. God rescues sinners by humbly taking their place: "FOR US" according to His grace
 - i. Romans 5:8 – God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us
 - ii. Rom 8:32-34 – Christ intercedes for us because God is for us!
 - iii. Gal 3:13 – Christ became a curse for us in order to redeem us from the curse of the Law
 - i. Titus 2:14 – Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works. (like Him!)
- c. Jesus did not stand aloof, look down upon us, or make us lie in the beds that we made, but rather came down, humbled himself to serve to the point of death, and bore our death "for us" that we might become a new people, a new family, a new dwelling of the Most High God
 - a. "The gospel is *for* us, not *about* us. It isn't about anything that we do, feel, or choose. It is the Good News about Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished for us." — Michael Horton

5. Our King-Brother Became Our Keeper So That We Would be Made the Children of God

- a. The Apostle Paul revealed that God has made us a New Nation and New Family
 - i. In general, the intensity of these images cannot be squared with merely attending church on Sunday — even regularly.
 - ii. These images imply a far deeper involvement in the church.
- b. A New Nation — Cross-cultural
 - i. We have a KING together that rules us and unites us
 - ii. This image implies that:
 1. We are making close friends with people from groupings, classes or races who, apart from the gospel, we'd never know or care to know.
 2. We are Christian *first* and white or black or Asian, second. We are Christian first and rich or poor or middle class, second.
 3. We do not let our old class divisions divide us. LOVE the "UNLOVEABLE"
 - iii. There is a King-first mentality to all that we do in this Kingdom and through this Kingdom.
 1. The Kingdom is about the King. It is not a democracy that we have been transferred to (Col 1:13), but to a theocratic Kingdom.
 2. Our very presence, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, proclaims the glory of the King
 3. Our humble submission to His Word and desires proclaim the glory of the gracious King (Lev 11:45; 1 Pet 1:15-16)

- c. A Family — We Are Our Brother’s Keeper and He is Ours
 - i. We have a Father who loves us all and we serve Him together
 - ii. This image implies that:
 - 1. We do not simply “have meetings” but we share many of the basic activities of life with other believers
 - 1) eating together
 - 2) recreation
 - 3) prayer
 - 4) spending time
 - 5) sharing homes and possessions.
 - 2. We are letting our whole lives be in contact with whole lives of some other Christians.
 - 3. You are accountable personally to some others. You have shared enough about your sins, and you spend enough time with others so that people really see whether you are growing in Christ.
 - iii. We wrestle together, seeking together to please our Father who loves us
 - 1. There is a God-first humility among the children, for the Father is glorious One who bears the family name.
 - 2. We passionately seek purity in life for we were saved by the blood of Jesus to be pure (Titus 2:14)
 - 1) Because we are children, we are to imitate our Father in holiness (1 Peter 1:13-19; Eph 5:1)
 - 2) The proof of our pardon is in our passion for purity (Piper)
 - iv. This image implies that:
 - 1. We are praying with others and letting them see how you really feel about God. It is *together* that we are inhabited. Your spirituality is no longer private.
 - 2. We experience God *with* other people with some consistency.
 - 1) *Corporate* prayer, study, worship, and work, etc.
 - 2) De-emphasis of the individual spirituality that has pervaded our society and our churches
 - v. The presence of the Spirit implies a deep, humble, God-first repentance among the stones...*we are the stones meant for the glory of the Resident.*
 - 1. Jesus is the cornerstone of this Temple, the One holding it together
 - 2. Indwelled by the Spirit, we are to set ourselves against the flesh *together* and see His purposes are ours

6. So, Am I My Brother’s Keeper?

- a. How am I truly loving my brothers?
 - i. We are to “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us...” (Eph 5:2)
 - ii. The key to loving each other is found in fixing our eyes upon Jesus
 - 1. The gospel humbles my Edom-like pride for it proves that I am so sinful that Jesus had to die for me!
 - 2. The gospel also encourages me to admit my need to change and to reach out and love, even when I am unappreciated and unloved by others, because Jesus loves me so much that He did die for me
 - 3. So, I can joyfully and humbly love others, even when I am treated like an enemy by resting in the deep, deep, love of Jesus
- b. What does my brother need?
 - i. My brother needs Jesus!
 - ii. To see and savor Him more and more, to trust Him more and more and to entrust himself to Christ more and more

- c. Am I seeing him in his point of need because I'm living with him and I know him?
- d. This is the point of our home groups! This is the goal of our small groups: learning to love each other by fixing our eyes upon Christ and His glorious gospel together and applying the gospel to our lives...together
 - i. Home groups are not merely about fellowship, but about Christ!
 - 1. I can joyfully repent of my failure to love, for Christ is being formed in me
 - 2. I can humbly love and serve my brother who does not appreciate me, for Christ is my righteousness and He loves more than I can even imagine!
 - ii. Golf bag analogy of the local church
 - 1. Driver: The truth proclaimed to many, but not particularized or applied well
 - 2. Irons: The truth proclaimed to fewer in number, but particularized much better and applied to the situation of the heart in small groups
 - 3. Putter: The truth proclaimed to the individual, particularized to the specific situation of need in one-on-one discipleship
 - iii. The goal of each stroke is to get the ball in the hole: to glorify God through the proclamation of His Word so that one responds in loving faith and humble obedience to Him.
 - 1. Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength
 - 2. Loving our neighbor as we do ourselves

Conclusion:

As we rejoice in the stories of bravery and fortitude on the 10th anniversary of September 11, 2001, let us also reflect on the reality that we have much more in common with the hearts of those who flew the planes than of those who worked the rubble. In our relationships with the ones that we find hard to love, those who make themselves the enemies of our time and of our comforts, who reject us and refuse us, and think only of themselves and are often related to us by blood, are we not casting fiery arrows of disdain toward them, standing aloof and distant, looking down on them as deserving of all the failure and suffering that they receive? Have we not delighted in their downfall, opening our mouths wide to tell them so when their joy lies in rubble and their loss brings them angry grief? Have we not benefited from our sister's collapse, even if only in reputation and self-righteousness?

We have! And we need a brother to keep us! We need a Savior to save us! We were the ones who wronged, the ones who avenged, the ones who denied being our brother's keeper! But praise be to God who has become the Keeper of our souls, the Redeemer of the ungodly, the Savior of sinners through the humble sacrifice of His own Son, His brother's keeper. We could not do enough or be enough to earn God's favor, but He gave it freely, out of humble love, though all things were created by Him and for Him and through Him, it is right that He should suffer to bring His brothers to glory!! Oh! I have been a fool, O God, for demanding my rights when you gave up yours! I have been a terrorist to my brother with self-righteousness in my heart when you gave up your life for me, the ungodly. Yet, you did it for us! Your love is so extravagant, so sublime, so heavenly.

We do not deserve God's grace, so how can deny our brother in our hearts? Jesus had to die for our sins, so how can we stand aloof when our brother is in need even though he has failed us? You and I, redeemed by the all-consuming grace of God are called to be our brother's keepers, to love our neighbors, and to serve one another. And we can do this because of His divine power working in us to form us into the image of Christ, that you and I would be lovers of our enemies with works of redemption that restore rather than evil desires that tear to the ground. By the grace of God, I pray that you and I would be thus transformed and that our community would be actively redeemed so that God would be glorified in us and many more brothers and sisters brought to glory through faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.