God Restores His People

Memory Verse

“I will put this third through the fire; I will refine them as silver is refined and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say: They are my people, and they will say: The L ORD is our God.”

—Zechariah 13:9
The Vision of Future Justice

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God remembers sin and one day will judge the world and deliver His people.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Obadiah

In 2006, a song no one expected hit the airwaves: a new song from Johnny Cash, who had died three years earlier. But this was not “Ring of Fire” or “Folsom Prison Blues.” A cover of a traditional folk song, this recording was like nothing heard before by an entire generation familiar mostly with the faux-angst and sugary vacuousness of modern pop music. It was something else entirely, something weightier—a word to sinners, a lament, and a warning. Cash, in the role of world-worn prophet, crooned, “You can run on for a long time / Run on for a long time / Sooner or later, God’ll cut you down.” It’s almost impossible not to get chills listening to the song as Cash issues this dire warning.

❓ Share about a time when you heard a warning in an unexpected place. What was it, and why did it resonate with you?
Group Time

Point 1: The Lord will confront the boasts of an arrogant heart (Obad. 1-4).

1 The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Lord God has said about Edom: We have heard a message from the LORD; an envoy has been sent among the nations: “Rise up, and let us go to war against her.” 2 Look, I will make you insignificant among the nations; you will be deeply despised. 3 Your arrogant heart has deceived you, you who live in clefts of the rock in your home on the heights, who say to yourself, “Who can bring me down to the ground?” 4 Though you seem to soar like an eagle and make your nest among the stars, even from there I will bring you down. This is the LORD’s declaration.

Obadiah delivered his message during a dark time in Israel’s history, most likely after the Babylonian exile. Jerusalem was in ruins, and only a handful of people remained. But the Edomites felt no remorse over the fall of Judah. The Edomites, the descendants of Esau—Jacob’s older brother—rejoiced in their downfall. Theirs was a perverse delight in Judah and Israel getting what they deserved.

Think about a time when you saw someone you viewed as an opponent or enemy fall (e.g., a coworker, celebrity, or politician). How did you feel when you heard what happened, and why?

God directly confronted the attitude at the heart of Edom’s response to Judah’s situation—Edom’s arrogance. Edom believed they were untouchable, like a soaring eagle, but their arrogance deceived them. Rather than letting Edom’s arrogance stand, God was personally active in cutting them down to size, causing nations to rise up and war against Edom. God was going to bring them down, and nothing could stop it.

Voices from Church History

“A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions against the will and glory of God; and could a sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed.”

–Stephen Charnock (c. 1628-1680)
Point 2: The Lord will remember Edom’s failure to help His people in their time of distress (Obad. 10-14).

10 You will be covered with shame and destroyed forever because of violence done to your brother Jacob. 11 On the day you stood aloof, on the day strangers captured his wealth, while foreigners entered his city gate and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were just like one of them. 12 Do not gloat over your brother in the day of his calamity; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction; do not boastfully mock in the day of distress. 13 Do not enter my people’s city gate in the day of their disaster. Yes, you—do not gloat over their misery in the day of their disaster, and do not appropriate their possessions in the day of their disaster. 14 Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off their fugitives, and do not hand over their survivors in the day of distress.

God’s judgment was promised and one day came to Edom, just as it had come to Judah. This prompts us to consider how we should respond to displays of God’s judgment: We can respond arrogantly, as the Edomites did, or we can respond humbly. Obviously, we should opt for humility, and these three truths encourage us in this direction:

1) God was right to judge Judah as He did. 2) God was also right to judge Edom as He did. 3) God is still right in His judgment of people who persist in their sin today.

Why are we prone to gloat over the downfall of our enemies?

Our response to God’s judgment doesn’t stop with our attitude. Our attitude influences, if not outright determines, our actions. So we must carefully consider the ways in which we can respond to judgment. Edom took advantage of the survivors of Judah’s judgment, and for their lack of compassion, Edom is no more. Christians should learn from this lesson and act for the good of all humanity and the glory of God.

Social Concern: All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the _________________ of _________________ supreme in our own lives and in _________________ _________________.

Point 3: The Lord will judge the nations and deliver His people on the day of the Lord (Obad. 15-21).

15 For the day of the LORD is near, against all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; what you deserve will return on your own head. 16 As you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and gulp down and be as though they had never been. 17 But there will be a deliverance on Mount Zion, and it will be holy; the house of Jacob will dispossess those who dispossessed them. 18 Then the house of Jacob will be a blazing fire, and the house of Joseph, a burning flame, but the house of Esau will be stubble; Jacob will set them on fire and consume Edom. Therefore no survivor will remain of the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.

The Book of Obadiah is a warning of coming judgment but also a message of compassion. One reason is the judgment on Edom, and the nations, would demonstrate God’s compassion for His people, revealing once again that God is gracious and just. The second reason is God’s warning was also a message of compassion for the Edomites and the nations, an opportunity to turn away from their sin before it was too late.

God Is Just: Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make ________________ by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in ________________.

How are you encouraged knowing that God is both gracious and just?

19 People from the Negev will possess the hill country of Esau; those from the Judean foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will possess the territories of Ephraim and Samaria, while Benjamin will possess Gilead. 20 The exiles of the Israelites who are in Halah and who are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath as well as the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the cities of the Negev. 21 Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to rule over the hill country of Esau, but the kingdom will be the LORD’s.

These last verses are steeped in the hope that we have in the gospel because they find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Jesus is the great ruler and deliverer of His people past, present, and future. Jesus is the Lord to whom the kingdom belongs. And Jesus will bring about the final restoration of His people, even beyond the promised land. All of creation will be made new, and we will dwell in the kingdom with Jesus forever.
My Mission

Because we have received God’s grace and mercy, we are to have compassion and concern for the oppressed and distressed in our culture.

- How is God challenging you to obey in faith today through Obadiah’s message?
- What can your group do to show compassion to people who have been victimized or mistreated in your community?
- With whom will you share the gospel this week because of the reality of God’s judgment against arrogant sinners?

Voices from Church History

“It was the view of that strange compassion of the Saviour, moving him to die for his enemies, to bear double for all our sins, to taste death for every man; it was this view which gave him the impulse in every labor, which made all suffering light to him, and every commandment not grievous.”

—Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843)
**Daily Study**

**Day 1: Read Obadiah 1-21**

It’s hard to imagine that there’s much good news for us in an obscure book of the Bible like Obadiah. Tucked away in the Minor Prophets, it is the least read book of the Bible. But through its warnings against the arrogance of Edom and the hope of restoration present in its pages, it reminds us of an important truth: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God inspired every page of the Bible, and every word is meant for our good and growth in godliness. That includes Obadiah, which powerfully points us to God’s compassion and mercy even as it condemns the sinful deeds of the arrogant. Every word of Scripture points us to the good news of the gospel, showing us the reason for the hope we have in Christ. May it never be said of us that we left a page of Scripture unturned and missed an opportunity to glory in Christ. Instead, let us rejoice in every word, and feast on every page as we see Jesus on every page—even the obscure ones like the Book of Obadiah.

What books of the Bible do you struggle to read? Why?
Day 2: Read Jeremiah 49:7-22

Obadiah’s was not the only warning against Edom’s arrogance. Jeremiah’s prophecy was also a strong condemnation of their evil. But God didn’t stop with condemnation—He also called them to turn and run back! This is an example of God’s compassion toward sinners. Because He desires that people repent and be saved, He calls for us to flee from sin. He brings what is done in the darkness to light and then calls us to walk in that light (1 John 1:5-7).

God continues to do this today. As we read His Word, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. As we walk in relationship with other believers, we speak truth into one another’s lives, and we carry one another’s burdens as we pursue holiness. The conviction that comes in the moment is rarely comfortable. But the freedom that results from repentance is sweet.

Whom do you know who speaks difficult truth into your life?

Day 3: Read Obadiah 1-21

Edom and the nations had sinned against Judah and against God, and the Day of the Lord would come against them. But the promise of retribution was not the entirety of Obadiah’s message. God also promised restoration for His people. He would make them holy. And greater still, He would come and establish His kingdom for all to see.

Imagine what it must have been like to hear these words the first time. God’s people had never had a history of unfailing faithfulness. Throughout the Old Testament, God was continually calling His people to repentance, to turn away from the sin that ensnared them. The situation they found themselves in was the fruit of years of rebellion against God. Yet even as He disciplined them, God had not abandoned them. He would restore His people, and better still, ultimately He would establish His rule over all the nations.

How does God’s call to repentance challenge you today?
Day 4: Read Psalm 137:1-9

The people of Israel had been devastated by the Babylonians. Jerusalem was burned to the ground. The temple was ruined. The people were murdered, and those who were kept alive were taken as slaves. And through it all, the Babylonians—who had been used as instruments of judgment against God’s wayward people—rejoiced. They delighted in the destruction they caused. But despite his harsh language, the psalmist was not wishing for vengeance in human terms. He was praying for God’s justice. He was putting his trust in God’s promise to repay the Babylonians for what they had done. He was trusting that God would deliver His people, just as He had promised. Throughout this psalm, the psalmist called the people to remember: Remember Jerusalem in your grief—and remember the Lord’s promise of deliverance.

How are you able to remain hopeful when God seems indifferent?

Day 5: Read Obadiah 1-21

As much as Obadiah is a book about sin and judgment, it is also one of hope. And as believers today, we have an even greater hope reading it because we have seen the promise begin to come to fruition in Jesus. When Jesus—the Son of God Himself—began His earthly ministry, He declared, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news!” (Mark 1:15). He came proclaiming “the good news of God” (1:14) and performing signs and wonders. He went to the cross and died in place of sinners and was raised again from death. And God gave Him power and authority over all creation, and every knee “in heaven and on earth and under the earth” is commanded to bow before Him and “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

How does the gospel give you hope today?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- The Lord will confront the boasts of an arrogant heart (Obad. 1-4).
- The Lord will remember Edom’s failure to help His people in their time of distress (Obad. 10-14).
- The Lord will judge the nations and deliver His people on the day of the Lord (Obad. 15-21).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

What effect does the prospect of God's judgment have on your attitude?

What have you learned from non-Christians when talking with them about the concept of God's judgment?

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UNIT 16

SESSION 1

SESSION 2
3. Andrew Murray, Humility and Absolute Surrender (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 27.

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

UNIT 17

SESSION 1
2. Stephen Charnock, Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God (New York: Robert Carter and Brother, 1874), 94.

SESSION 2
1. N. T. Wright, For All God’s Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 8.

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

UNIT 18

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4
3. Oswald Chambers, in The Quotable Oswald Chambers, comp. and ed. David McCasland (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2008) [eBook].
A Word from the Editor

Think about the encouragement people often share to help others through times of adversity. We might hear someone speak of how pressure is required to transform coal into a diamond; thus, pressure can be good for us, transforming us into someone better. Or we might be told of the hatchling that has to work to break through its eggshell, and that struggle is good for this creature—even necessary—so that it grows strong. Likewise, adversity strengthens us and positions us to be who we were meant to be.

While these illustrations might provide encouragement, they reveal something quite important about the world’s view of adversity. The world sees adversity as an opportunity for a person to dig deep, gaze within their soul, and discover who he or she truly is. But the gospel tells a different story—a better story. The gospel sees adversity as an opportunity for a person to look high above, gaze upon Christ, and see who He truly is. For it is Christ, not ourselves, who carries us through all trials and suffering. Adversity positions us to rely on Christ’s power, not an inner human strength that has been lying dormant.

In this volume we pick up the story of Scripture with the Jews living in bondage in a foreign land, the result of their rebellion against God. But even in the midst of judgment, God’s faithful love still shines forth brightly. We will witness God continuing to guide, strengthen, and protect His people in their time of great adversity, not to help them discover who they were but rather to understand who He is. At the same time, we will see God continue to drive the events of history toward the fulfillment of His ancient promise to provide the Rescuer, the One who would free people from an even greater bondage, that of sin and death.