

RUF Bible Study – The Minor Prophets  
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Obadiah – Does God Have Enemies?

Do you have any enemies yet? Sometimes it takes awhile to develop enemies, but some of you surely have some people you don't like even from grade school. I mentioned Scott Adams who told on me in second grade – argh. I think I was fairly oblivious to my other enemies, though I had people I didn't like and who didn't like me.

Do you wish that we could have an enemy button on facebook? We can friend people but not enemy them. Facebook would be a more honest place. I do know that some people are using facebook for nefarious purposes. They pose as people or friends of people in order to slander them and spread lies and evil reports about people. They're out there.

In this lesson we're going to talk about who God's enemies are. Obadiah is the fourth in the minor prophets. They aren't called minor because they're less important, but because they're shorter books than the other "major" prophets. Obadiah wrote in either the 800s B.C. or else in the 500s (after 587) – we're not really sure which one. Obadiah's name means "the servant of God" which could be a title or his name. We don't know anything about him. This book is a little different because it was written to the nation of Edom, which means it was written to people who weren't in the church. It's a book and prophecy to non-believers, or people who don't really care about God's word or his people. In that sense it sounds very relevant to our world today. We live in a place and on a campus that doesn't care about God, that disregards his words for us.

If our world says anything about this, it would say that God doesn't have enemies. He loves all people, if he exists he all.

Well, what does God say? If he has enemies, shouldn't we know who they are? That seems like pretty important information to consider. I'd like to know where I stand and which side I'm on.

We need to start with a story first though. We read in Romans 9: *As it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.'* God doesn't just give us strange statements like this, but he also tells us stories to paint a picture of what he's talking about.

Way back in Genesis 25, a woman named Rebekah was pregnant. God told her that there would be two nations inside of her. She could tell because they were wrestling and fighting, tearing things up in there, grabbing uteruses and generally causing abdominal problems.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, it was time for their birth. Esau came out first. His name means "red" which was appropriate because the Bible says he was hairy and red. It was like he was born with a carpet. He was a red wookie. He was shaving his neck hair below his shirt from when he was 10. He probably would shed in the summer. They called him Ginger for sure. He was a manly man, who'd go out hunting and fishing. Man vs. Wild stuff. Drinking moose urine and all of that.

Jacob came out second. He was even holding onto Esau when he came out. Jacob apparently was practically hairless. He was a smooth man, the text says. Now that may sound pretty good to some of you who may be tempted to shave your chest hair off and you probably would be glad not to have any back hair, but in the Bible this seems to mean that Jacob was the ultimate momma's boy. He loved to hang out at home, dwelling in the tents. He didn't want to get too far away. He was smooth, and his name means "deceiver." Michael Jackson had a song named "Smooth Criminal." That's a good track for Jacob.

Jacob ended up being a deceiver all his life. He tricked his dad into giving him an important blessing and then had to run away because he was afraid his brother would kill him. He got tricked into marrying two women, two sisters and then had 12 boys from these two women (and their servants). These were dysfunctional families for sure.

Eventually Jacob finds himself out in the wilderness about to meet his brother Esau again. Esau is not happy to see him and Jacob is afraid he's going to beat the tar out of him. The night, the night before they're going to meet, Jacob hears from God. That's an understatement. He doesn't just hear from God – he wrestles with God. As in literally wrestles. We think this was Jesus before he had come to the world.

After these full nelsons, body slams and figure fours, Jacob asks Jesus for a blessing. Jacob gets one. Well, he gets two things. He first gets permanently disabled. God touches his hip and puts it out of socket, so for forever Jacob walks with a limp to remind him of his encounter with God.

Then Jacob gets a name change. God says his name is now going to be Israel. God has made Jacob a new nation, his people. Certainly not because of anything Jacob had done. He was a deceiver. But it was out of God's love and favor. Esau too

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<sup>2</sup> I was listening to Josh Kouri, pastor at Frontline Church in Oklahoma City and am basically stealing his descriptions.

became a nation – the nation of Edom. This nation, these people ended up becoming the enemies of God. God chose Jacob. He hated Esau.

This is the backdrop for Obadiah, because it is talking to the enemies of God, the nation of Edom. And for us we need to realize that this is a picture of who God hates and loves, not just a list of people or a police blotter. It might be nice (and very scary) to just get a naughty and nice list. We could log into and check. “Okay, there I am. Let me see who else is on there. Ouch. Wow. I hope I’m good to go.” But we end up with characteristics and not lists, so we need to do a little more thinking than that.

### ***The enemies of God***

Who are the enemies of God? What does God hate?

The biggest characteristic we see here is that God hates pride. If you look at verse 3, we read: “*The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’*”

The situation here is that Edom was a nation situated in the mountains. It sat in between many countries, and it was powerful and had massive fortress defenses. You could think of a castle that could not be defeated. So they took great pride in that.

Pride is so destructive. We often think of pride as not any big deal at all. We should take pride in our work. We should take pride in our life, and our bodies and our achievements and our family. And that is true.

But we start to believe our own hype. That we are “all that.” That we cannot be defeated. That we will overcome.

Edom believed this, and it stood its ground against the people of God, the church, God’s children. It believed in its own defenses. It believed in its allies. And it believed in its wisdom.

What about you? What do you believe in?

It’s important to see that these things we believe in are not bad things in and of themselves. They aren’t evil. It’s not like we’re orcs and goblins and amassing great armies of wraiths and Dementors.

Instead it’s taking something that is good and using it in the wrong way. It’s thinking that *I* can hold the ring of power and wield it for good, when over and over again it has warped the people who carry it.

It’s thinking that you are funny enough or sexy enough or smart enough or outdoorsy enough or strong enough or hard-working enough.

This goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. Adam’s sin was pride. He thought he could know better than God. He thought he could discern right and wrong independent of God. This pride plunged us into the world we’re in.

But it even goes back farther than that. In Isaiah 14, which is a psalm usually thought of a pointing to Satan, we read: *You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high. I will sit on the mount of my assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’*”

Satan himself wanted to be like God. He wanted to be in first place, not underneath and serving God. This is the root of all our problems!

It is thinking too highly of ourselves and thinking we are God. This is why we hate people and hate God. We hate God because he says he demands the highest place in our lives. He demands first place and will not share it.

Does this make sense to you? Do you understand that we’re not necessarily talking about terrorists or cold-blooded murderers, but this could be very easily talking about nice, American, middle class moral people – people in your shoes? If we set ourselves as the most important thing, or anything as the most important thing, than we are proud, proud people.

Maybe in fourth grade you get to be your school’s gifted program. That starts become to be your identity. You become one of the smart people in school. So you work and work to make sure you get good grades and ace your tests and do well on your PSAT and SAT and ACT. You end up in college doing the same thing. You cannot jeopardize this position you have gained. You must go to grad school and the best one so you study and study to do well on those tests. Then in grad school you must achieve and attain. You finally get a job and then again you want to rise to the top, to be seen as an achiever, to be someone, to be something.

So there is nothing wrong with that. But it is all so wrong. If it becomes who you are, then it has become an idol in your life and your heart and that thing becomes your god. You will start to either hate God or marginalize him because he will get in your way and say things about your goals that you don’t like. He will not share that place in your heart. Your pride has distanced you from God. This happens all the time.

People can put their trust in anything. Watch one of my favorite documentaries *King of Kong*. It’s all about the world of competitive Donkey Kong video game playing. And it’s cutthroat. The villain is a guy named Billy Mitchell, and if you watch it you will hate him. Billy is a smooth, mullet-wearing, arrogant jerk. He is so full of himself. He thinks he cannot be beat, and when it looks like he might get taken down by a nobody (Steve Wiebe), then he starts to pull strings and work behind the scenes and make sure he can still keep the record. Why? Pride. Pride in having the high score of Donkey Kong! Don’t think you are immune from that pride.

When Obadiah is speaking, the times are good for Edom. They were doing well. And yet Obadiah said they would soon be going down. Their heroes would be demoralized (verse 8). This would be like Tennessee Tech saying on ESPN that they expected to beat OU. Yeah, right. It *could* happen, but no one believed it.

Those who are gripped with this pride can see so many things, but they cannot see themselves. They are strong, prosperous and successful, but they are in great, great danger.

Think of Apollo Creed in Rocky. Apollo picked Rocky because the guy he was supposed to fight couldn't do it. He needed an opponent so he picked someone he thought would be chump change. Apollo was the heavyweight champion of the world and could not be beaten. So he stopped training and then Rocky stepped into the ring and won (in Rocky II). Pride comes before the fall.

The other subset of God's enemies include those who hate and oppress God's people. God will stand up for his own. He will protect his children. If you hurt his mama and his Doritos, you will be in big trouble. That makes sense to us. If you touch my children, you will be my enemy. If you touch my bride, I will hurt you.

God's people had been – and have been – tortured, persecuted, picked over and violated. Thieves had come in and destroyed God's people and their lives. I've been robbed and it's a sickening feeling. I have a friend who was robbed, and they even took her journals. She just couldn't believe it.

God lets bad things happen to his people. We don't know why. But there is coming a day at the end when God will set all things right. That is our big hope. There was a man who was trying to murder the members of the church. He was a hitman in the early church, trying to pick off the main members one by one. His name was Saul.

One day Saul met Jesus on the road. Jesus said, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" The implication is that when you hurt the church, you hurt Jesus himself. And God will not allow that forever. Many people have died for their faith in Christ and the church, and those things will be made right. God will not stand for that forever. He loves his people.

Here is the scary thing – all people are God's enemies. We're not talking about one nation or another nation. It is not true that God loves America and he hates Iraq. God's enemies are those people who hate him, either actively or passively.

The Bible says in Ephesians 2 that *all of us* were children of wrath. We all hated God. None of us loved God. None of us sought out God. Read Romans 3. We all deserve the wrath and punishment of God.

What do you think about that? Have you often thought about the enemies of God? Do you know who they are? Do you know what God hates?

How about this list? Proverbs 6:16 *There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

There are other things God hates. Do you know what they are?

When I want to have a good relationship with my wife Julie, I need to know the things she likes. For Valentine's Day and our anniversary, I need to pick out things she wants and likes. Not to earn her favor, but because I love her. I would be wise to know her favorite colors, her favorite foods, where she likes to go out to eat. Right? Likewise, it would be good for me to know what she hates. I shouldn't think I would be winning her over by asking her to watch a scary movie on a date. She hates scary movies. I wouldn't get any love from her by serving her a plate of hot wings drenched in Sriracha. I *love* those. She *hates* them. It's good for me to know that.

Do you know what God hates? Do you know that you were born a child of wrath, an enemy of God? Can you identify with the pride of life? Is there something in your life that has first place in your life and in your heart, even if it's a good thing?

Many of you think of God as all and only love. You don't think he judges anyone or anything. He only forgives. That is a wrong, wrong picture. In Matthew 11:23, Jesus says, "*And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades.*" And in Matthew 23:12 he says, "*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbled himself will be exalted.*"

### ***The friends of God***

So that is pretty depressing. It's good to know God has some enemies, I guess. That helps me to understand that he actually cares.

What if God didn't care about sex trafficking? That would mean that that really wasn't wrong. Those are tremendous evils in our society, so a God of love *MUST* hate things that are against love. I

So who are the friends of God and how in the world do we get counted in that list? If I want to friend God, how do I do it? Is there a button to push.

Let's talk a little about the opposite of pride – humility. Humility is where you view yourself as you really are, and you understand your place. Humility is placing yourself under someone or something to learn from that person. It's finding your true place.

Let me just say it now – you are not God. You are not the center of the story. You are not the center of the universe. I know that may come as a shock. It does to me when I realize it now and then, when I get jarred back to a right understanding of the way things work. "*Oh wait, I'm not the center of the universe? The world doesn't revolve around me and my feelings and*

*my plans? Huh.*” Once I remember that great truth, I am set so much more free. I am released from the bondage of myself and my pride. I can live for something else greater than myself. I get out of the trap. Humility is key to this.

As John Stott says, “At every stage of our Christian development, and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, pride is our greatest enemy and humility is our greatest friend.”<sup>3</sup>

We talked about this in the book of Hosea. God called us Not My People. That was our name. Those are the rejected enemies of God, the people who God hated.

But – follow the logic – we know that God doesn’t hate *everyone*. So whom does he love and how do they get there? Well in a real sense they are chosen by him. Not by any thing in and of themselves, but by his choice, his loving choice. We know it’s not because he only chooses the good people. The people he chose aren’t even good. Israel wasn’t good. The church isn’t good. Christians aren’t good. You aren’t good.

Yet he has My People. He has a bride whom he loves. He has people who serve him and worship him and love him and whom he loves so dearly as children, as friends, as even a bride.

In Obadiah 17 we read, *But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.* And in 21: *Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.*

There is a message of hope in there. Amidst the judgment, there is hope. There will be salvation somehow on the holy mountain. There will be saviors, A Savior!, and the kingdom of God shall come.

How is this possible?

I hope you know what’s coming. It’s possible because of God’s only son, Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Chosen One, the one who took the judgment due God’s enemies so we could be loved as God’s friends.

Jesus showed us true humility. God himself took on human flesh, which might have been cool in some ways but had to be pretty humbling. Jesus lived a life of poverty and suffering. Although he was the King of the Universe, he didn’t have a home or a place to sleep or regular meals. People really didn’t care about him that much. At the end of his life, he washed the feet of his followers, which was the place of servants. Then he went to death on a cross between two criminals. That is not the proudest moment of someone who is trying to change the world. At least not normally.

But God says that those who are humbled will be exalted. And those who are exalted will be humbled. The kingdom of God is not business as usual. It is a topsy turvy world that is upside down. The least are the greatest and the greatest are the least. Jesus said blessed are the humbled, the poor in spirit, the brokenhearted, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Jesus humbled himself and took on flesh in order to die for people who hated him. That is loving your enemies. He was cast out so that you could be brought in. He was taken down and out so that you could be lifted up. Do you see the great exchange that happens there in the gospel? Do you see how salvation works there?

God makes his friends out of his enemies by loving them and changing them.

What can you do with that?

The first thing is to humble yourself. Stop living in your pride. Stop living with you as the center. Realize and recognize your pride and your idolatry for what they are. See your pride of control. See your pride of image. See your pride of safety. See your pride of uniqueness. See your pride of love and marriage and family. Put God instead in that place. You are not the center of life.

Humble yourself in this way to stop trusting in your lofty positions and instead put yourself in the hands of Christ. Hear his words. Stop resisting them. Your pride of intellectualism is in the way. Trust in Christ. Trust in him and his ways. Put your life in his life. He is the one who conquered death after all. He is the one who rose from the grave.

Then consider what it might mean to walk the life of humility with Jesus. It is the way of the cross. God still hates the proud. We hear it in the way we talk, the way we speak to people, our judging words. We hear it in our cynicism. We see it as we trust in other things for comfort, security, safety, image that aren’t God himself and Christ alone.

As we walk with Jesus in humility, the fruit of the Spirit come out of us. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are the characteristics of someone who is lovingly and humbly following Jesus. This person will love his or her enemies, because that is how Christ treated us.

There will be trials and sufferings. We’re being very real and honest about that. Obadiah speaks of those things. The church was robbed. The church was beat up. The church was used and abused. But there is hope. There is resurrection life in here. There is a savior.

Jesus talks about trials coming. He likens that to rain. Rain hits our lives. It not a matter of if but of when. Some of you have had tremendous trials already. Others of you have much bigger trials yet to come.

When those rains come, will your house be built on sand or rock? The house built on the sand is a house that looks good on the outside and works pretty well a lot of the time, but that is ultimately build on the personal pride of life. It is on really shaky ground. It doesn’t view what is real. It leaves out God as the center, as the foundation.

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<sup>3</sup> Stott, found in Dever, 754

Instead, build your house on the rocks. This is the place of trust and humility. It's the rock-solid bedrock place of friendship with God, of relationship with him as your anchor, as your fortress – in him you will not be shaken. Anything else will be brought down.

*My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*  
by Edward Mote, 1797-1874

*1. My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.*

*2. When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.*

*3. His oath, His covenant, and blood Support me in the whelming flood; When every earthly prop gives way, He then is all my Hope and Stay. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.*

*4. When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found, Clothed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne! On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.*