Good morning, Life Fellowship. Now before we begin, please turn in your Bible to the book of Obadiah, and let’s read this together.

“The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom: We have heard a report from the LORD, and a messenger has been sent among the nations: "Rise up! Let us rise against her for battle!" Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be utterly despised. 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?" Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD.

If thieves came to you, if plunderers came by night-- how you have been destroyed!-- would they not steal only enough for themselves? If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings? How Esau has been pillaged, his treasures sought out! All your allies have driven you to your border; those at peace with you have deceived you; they have prevailed against you; those who eat your bread have set a trap beneath you-- you have no understanding. Will I not on that day, declares the LORD, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of Mount Esau? And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman, so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.

Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress. Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity; do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity. Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives; do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress.

For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head. For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually; they shall drink and
swallow, and shall be as though they had never been. 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. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.

Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau, and those of the Shephelah shall possess the land of the Philistines; they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria, and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. The exiles of this host of the people of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the Negeb. Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's."

Now I don’t know if any of you will remember offhand, or from memory, James ‘Quick’ Tillis, a heavyweight boxer from Tulsa, Oklahoma. But back in the 80’s he made his way to Chicago, the Windy City, and he got off a bus with two cardboard suitcases under his arms. He set his suitcases down on the street, he looked up at the Sears Tower, and he said, “I shall conquer Chicago.” And after saying that, he looked down, and both of his suitcases were gone.

The Bible says in Proverbs Chapter 16 and verse 18 that “Pride goes before destruction.” There is just something about pride that has a way of getting to all of us. It can bring us all down, and we all have to be aware of this growing disease that can take place in each of our lives. In fact the Bible says in Proverbs Chapter 16 and verse 25, “There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way to death.”

Have you ever had that happen in your life? You got a little bit too haughty, a little bit too puffed up, and then all of a sudden, you have been brought down. Why is it that we get prideful in our own hearts, and in our own lives? I think there are a number of reasons. C. S. Lewis, in his book, ‘Mere Christianity,’ said: “A proud man is always looking down on things and people.”

And of course as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you. And that is the problem with pride. It goes around life seeing itself as the final arbiter, the measurer of what is right. It looks down on others in order to feel better about its own self. And pride can be very destructive in our lives. In fact the Bible refers to it as one of the seven deadly sins. There are seven sins that can really lead to death, with pride being the main one. We have to really watch our hearts to be sure that pride isn’t growing.
Things like comparing can create pride, or having sense of feeling better than others, or being judgmental or not listening to others. Feeling like we can do it our own way, we often will reject the advice of others. Why? Not because we can’t see that other people might have something good to say; it is just our feelings are screaming so loudly that we can’t bear to listen to somebody else lest they deter us from going on the course that we have set out for ourselves. And therefore we have to be sure to watch out for pride.

That is what is going to lead us to the book of Obadiah today. How many of you have ever heard a sermon on a Sunday morning from the book of Obadiah? Okay, only one person raised their hand and they were in the first service this morning. So out of two services, only one person raised their hand.

Now Obadiah is not the kind of book that you wake up in the morning and you think, ‘Man, I am just feeling like I need to hear from Obadiah today. I need a message from Obadiah.’ Or when is the last time you thought, ‘I am just really feeling burdened about getting into Obadiah today.’ No, most people don’t go to Obadiah for their devotional reading. But there is a message there for us, and that is what I hope you will be encouraged by today.

In fact, the attempt for me is to show that all Scripture can speak to our lives, and to our times. And I hope that by the end of this message, you will be able to think that the book Obadiah is pretty neat, go figure. Now Obadiah is not like an ancient way of describing a toothache. ‘You know I am really struggling with Obadiah lately.’ It is not that. Obadiah is a prophet. And we know nothing about this prophet outside of the book of Obadiah. His name means ‘servant of the Lord,’ and maybe that was just the title. Or perhaps that was his name. But Obadiah was a prophet, a minor prophet.

When I was younger in my faith I would hear someone say, ‘minor prophet and major prophet,’ and I would kind of get this picture in my mind, ‘So are the Minor Prophets like weasel prophets? And are the Major Prophets like stud prophets?’ But that was not the way to understand it at all. The Minor Prophets are just the shorter books, and the Major Prophets are the longer books. Jeremiah and Ezekiel have lots of chapters and Isaiah has 66 chapters. They are longer books, so they are Major Prophets. Then you have the Minor Prophets such as Joel with four chapters, Haggai with two chapters, Jonah has four chapters, and Obadiah has only one chapter. These are the Minor Prophets because their content amount is smaller.

So we come to Obadiah and it is only one chapter in length. It has only 21 verses, but there are lots that we can learn there. It is a message to the nation of Edom and how they are going to go down because of their pride. They are going to be judged because of their pride. Now judgment doesn’t always sit the best in our culture. We don’t like
thinking about judgment. We don’t like picturing a God who judges. But the problem is when God doesn’t judge, then we wonder where God is.

I am sure that people who were at the Auschwitz or the Buchenwald concentration camps during World War II were wondering where God was. Why was He not bringing justice for them? I am sure there were others who wondered when they were under the atrocities they experienced with Pol Pot and the killing fields at Cambodia. Or what about the atrocities that happened under Stalin or Mussolini or other rulers? I am sure there were people that were ready for God to bring His justice on them. And there were people who thought, ‘Is God just?’ because He doesn’t do anything about it, or so it seemed to them.

God is in this kind of predicament with us humans, where when He does act justly, and we read those passages in the Scriptures, we are like, ‘What’s up with God? What is He doing?’ But then when God doesn’t act, we are like, ‘What’s up with God? Where is He?’ So here is the deal. God is a just God, but He acts according to His own time table.

And in the book of Obadiah, the time has come. Edom is ripe for judgment. And what I want us to realize at the outset of this message is that once we understand what it is that Edom is guilty of it helps us to understand that it is the grace of God for those left remaining that justice comes their way. It is sort of this cleansing process. It is an act of God’s grace.

It is like that whole thing when you read about the Canaanite conquests in the book of Joshua. A lot of people want to go, ‘Boy, God was cruel. What is up with the conquests?’ Well, first of all, there were over 400 years where God graciously waited for them to kind of clean up their acts. And then they were oppressive as nations. It was the grace of God to actually do something about them. So God in His mercy, God in His grace acts. But He doesn’t always act according to our time.

So when was the book of Obadiah written? You know scholars can always kind of arm wrestle around dates, but I would kind of see the time that I would be most comfortable with as sometime between 585 and 550 BC, so sometime in that time frame. And what is the best context, best interpretive context to understand this one chapter book? I think the best context to see this in would be the context of the Babylonian captivity that took place in 586 BC.

Now don’t let this history blind you from the message that we want to come across. What took place in 586 BC was a king who had to get humbled in his own time, and that king was Nebuchadnezzar. He was humbled himself. And he had been so prideful. This guy was just filled with pride. He had this huge gold statue built and he
wanted people to bow down to it. He ended up taking God’s people into captivity in 586 BC.

And the problem in Obadiah is the Edomites were all about partnering in this crime with Babylon. Now I want to give you some information about the Edomites. What is taking place here? Well first of all Obadiah was a prophet. We don’t know anything about him outside of this book. We are talking about 580 years before the time of Christ when this goes down. This Edomite nation had grown very, very arrogant, very, very stiff necked, very, very prideful and they are going to be humbled.

That is the story. And we are going to learn some principles about how to guard against pride in our own lives, and how to recognize pride in our own lives. And we are going to learn how to see the manifestations of it in our own lives. And all of us are going to be invited to humble ourselves before God, to take on a posture of humility before Him.

Now we learn about the Edomites basically all over the Scriptures in the Old Testament in judgment passages. Remember the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis Chapter 25. They were the twin brothers born to Isaac and Rebecca. And it is said that two nations will be inside of Rebecca, which was referring to Jacob and Esau. The two nations would be at war with one another when they were supposed to be allies.

Who were those nations? Jacob was God’s people, and Esau was the Edomites. And now we come to Obadiah and what we are learning about is this battle that was prophesied about in Genesis Chapter 25 between two nations. Two brothers who were at odds with each other, because remember Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. And that ‘at odds’ riff that they had with each other continued on. And we are going to see it pick up today.

What we see then in Obadiah and verse 1, with that context in mind, is Obadiah’s has had a vision from the Lord. Now God would speak to His people in a myriad of fashions. He would speak to them through an audible word, like when Samuel was hearing the word of the Lord. Or Moses, up on Mount Sinai was hearing the word of the Lord. So God could speak audibly, but at other times He would speak with dreams to His people. He would utilize dreams like with Joseph or Daniel and others in the Scriptures where there would be profound dreams that would need to be interpreted.

And then there were these visions, like Isaiah had in Chapter 6 and verses 1 through 8. And in this case it is Obadiah who has a vision. God is not handcuffed in how He chooses to get his message across to us. What is great about God is He can communicate to all of us in different ways. In fact at times He might communicate to you through the word of God, and another time it might be through a circumstance. And you know that God has spoken, that He is giving you a holy invite into something, or He
is giving you a warning. He can speak in many ways. And He does. What is crucial is for us to understand and sense His voice.

So we want to learn how to be humble before God. And guess what? That is learned in a life of spiritual discipline. I am going through Dallas Willard’s book right now called, ‘The Spirit of the Discipline.’ And Willard basically shares that we need spiritual disciplines in our life because we don’t grow on the fly. We don’t get sanctified on the spot. What prepares us for the circumstances where we would be tempted to act out in the flesh is by posturing ourselves in the spirit of discipline, of prayer and being in God’s word.

And when we go out of our house and ignore God day after day apart from God, ignoring our need to discipline ourself, to get before God, we will be put in circumstances where we are more edgy that we ought to be, when we will say things that we wish we hadn’t said and where we will react wrongly. But if we will train in spiritual discipline, what happens is we will be preparing ourselves for life in God’s canvas and His campus, in order to handle life as it comes our way in a sanctified mature way.

And if you are like me, you know how easy it is to roll out of bed, and go out and just feel overwhelmed by the day’s agenda. We get busy before we know it, and then we are frustrated at the traffic, we are frustrated at checkout lines being too slow, and we are frustrated at our spouse and our kids. And at the end of the day we are mad at ourselves and we have to go into a repentance session.

We need time with God to get humble. Imagine the person who says, ‘I am going to show up at the gym and I am just going to go in and bench press 300 pounds.’ But they haven’t been working out. And if you want to bench press 300 pounds it is going to take some serious training. And when life crushes us, spiritual discipline if it is done from the heart and not from the name of legalism, it will be a resource to help us in that moment.

Willard talks in his book about how Jesus said His yoke is light. Yes, His yoke is light but it doesn’t feel light. And it doesn’t feel light if we avoid the spiritual discipline, if we try to do the ‘on the spot’ Christianity. But if we get before Him and we depend on Him and we lean on Him, then it will help His yoke to feel light. Now what does He mean by yoke? It is the yoke to become righteous. You will find that His yoke to become righteous will seem lighter than going the way of sinning and having the yoke of guilt upon you. So we need to humble ourselves and we need to realize that that takes time.

Obadiah verse 1 says, “Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom.” This nation would be in today’s Jordan in the southern part of the Dead Sea area. Then we read on in verse 2 to see what God says will happen to Edom. “I will make you small among the
nations, and you shall be utterly despised.” So Edom is going to become small. Edom had been puffed up, it had felt big, it had felt popular and now they are going to be deflated. Edom was going to go from being liked by their allies to being despised amongst the nations.

And that is kind of what pride does. It humbles us. We start taking our security and how popular we are, or how big we are, and we get prideful. And then something grows and something festers until God deflates that. Here was a group of people who were going to be made small among the nations. They were going to be despised.

Now notice a word about what causes this pride. Verse 3 says, “The pride of your heart has deceived you.” And that is the problem with pride. Your heart doesn’t even recognize pride. In fact one of the great tools of pride is blame. One way to detect that we are a prideful person is if we are always blaming. The person who is always going through life blaming others is struggling with pride, because as long as that person can find somebody else to put the blame on, they can feel better about themselves. They don’t have to look at their own heart. They don’t have to see their disease.

And that was Edom. They couldn’t recognize their own sin. They couldn’t recognize their own faults. Edom was puffed up. Edom at one time was popular and it was finding its security in all the wrong things. And it was about to be humbled. And we need to learn how pride works because pride is deceptive. If the pride of your heart has deceived you, then there is something about pride that not only blames others, but it believes lies. It tells the wrong narrative and then we believe lies.

So what happens is we blame others in life, and then we believe things about ourselves because we create our own narrative. We create a world in how we want to be perceived by people. And when their words don’t match with the narrative that we have said about ourselves, we reject them. We shoot them down. We blame them. We get mad at them. We use anger against them, because it is messing with the narrative that we have come to believe about ourselves – this lie.

We have to be careful with deception. It is very, very powerful. It is tricky. And we are all susceptible to it. “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling.” This is ancient day Sala, and we know Petra was a city in Edom. And those of you that are going with me to Israel know that we are also going into Jordan, and we are going to see Petra, one of the ancient wonders of the world. In fact we have 32 people going to Israel from our church this year. Isn’t that exciting? I can tell you this is going to be wonderful to be able to go there and to see Petra. We are going to see these clefts that were up in the rock that people found security in.
And I would say something that I hope is really helpful to all of us. In the same way that walls were a form of defense in the ancient world, so too people in Petra and the Sala region of Edom would build their homes about 5,000 feet high. And what would happen is these groups would build their homes and their communities up in the side of the mountain, in the clefts of the rock. And in the same way that walls would form a defense and help you to be protected from your enemies, because without a wall you were left defenseless, the people of Petra in the clefts of the rock would feel extra secure in the heights. They would feel extra protected because they were up high.

And they thought, ‘Who can get us up here? We are protected.’ Can’t you sense how puffed up they were? They were feeling unapproachable. They were feeling like they couldn’t be reached. They were feeling indestructible. And that is what pride does. It makes us feel indestructible. It puffs us up. It makes us feel like we are better than others and that we can’t be reached.

Not only that, look at this next metaphor that is used. “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?’ Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.” In other words, no one is out of the reach of God’s judgment. ‘If you want to puff your heart up with pride, like with the Tower of Babel, I will bring it down and I will spread you out.’

‘Nebuchadnezzar, if you want to have people bow before your statue, I will make you eat like a wild animal. Pharaoh, if you want to harden your heart and you think you have it made, I will part the Red Sea and you will go down in it. Edom, you may think your luxurious homes high in the clefts of the rock are safe, you may think you are at the height of your success, and you may think that you can climb so high that you soar like an eagle and can escape all your prey.’ But guess what? None of it is out of God’s reach.

We need to remember that the Bible says “Your sins will find you out.” And that is another way that we deceive ourselves. We try to hide our sins from others and we don’t care what God thinks about it. We are living like functional Atheists, because what we are saying is, ‘I want to hide it from others, because I care more about what they think than reveal it to the God who already knows what I am hiding.’ Do you see the silliness of this predicament that we can get into?

Now for those of you that loved ‘Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade’ like I did when I was a kid, that is Petra as well. So if you want to come to Israel with us next time and go to Jordan and see Petra, if it is not because you want to see where the book of
Obadiah took place, then you may want to go because it is where Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones kind of went down there.

And these Edomites were going to be humbled. And we are going to get the reasons why they would be humbled. I want you to see this so let’s look in verse 5 where it says, “If thieves came to you, if plunderers came by night – how you have been destroyed – would they not steal only enough for themselves?” So it is like if a thief breaks in and steals something, they will just take what they need. If they break into your house they might take your jewelry but they will probably leave your TV.

“*If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings? How Esau (or Edom) has been pillaged, his treasures sought out!*” So their riches would be wiped out. Now what God is going to do, and what I want you to notice here is He humbles them in the areas where they found pride in themselves. So they found pride in their riches, and they were humbled in their riches. They found pride in the security of their heights, and they were brought down to the depths.

They found pride furthermore as we continue on with their allies. Let’s look at verse 7. “*All your allies have driven you to your border; those at peace with you have deceived you.*” Now isn’t this interesting because Edom should have been an ally to Jerusalem. But instead they served as an enemy and became deceptive. And so the law of the harvest, of reaping what you sow, applies here. These apparent allies that Edom thought they had would end up turning on them.

What would that mean to have a lot of allies? It would mean that you were popular. You have your peeps, you have your network. And Edom took pride in their network. They took pride in their allies. They took pride in their popularity. And that was now going to be dealt with. The allies would end up being a part of Edom’s humbling process.

They also took pride in their wisdom. Look at verse 8 where it says, “*Wil I not on that day, declares the Lord, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of Mount Esau?*” This would have been like a university area in that time. This place was blooming and flourishing. There were wise people there, but all that wisdom will be humbled as well. Their security will be humbled. And they had military strength as well. Look at verse 9, “*And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman, so that every man from mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.*”

So what can we learn just as a means of reflection here? We have been learning about this prophet Obadiah who has prophesied that judgment is coming on this nation of Edom. Edom was the future descendent of Esau, the brother of Jacob. And Edom grew very proud in this southern Dead Sea region. They were prideful and they began to live completely obsessed for themselves. They thought very highly of themselves. They
were prideful in the areas of their lives such as in their place. They thought they had risen to a certain level of status and were high up. They thought that they were indestructible.

Then they were prideful in their riches. They had big bank accounts. They found security in their riches. They were prideful in their popularity. It was all about being popular with their allies. They felt secure about that. They were prideful in their education. They had a lot of wisdom but it would also be brought down. They were even prideful in their military prowess. All of these things that create a great culture like wealth, power, prosperity, military strength, wisdom and good allies would all come tumbling down. God would humble them.

So I want to ask you this question today – where in your own heart this morning are you finding your security? Are you finding security through your riches? If so, are you like the rich young ruler who wouldn’t give up his riches to follow Jesus? He went away sad because he wanted his riches more than Jesus. And sometimes what Jesus does is humble us in these certain areas. If pride becomes our ultimate, He will bring that down. And if being a person of power is your ultimate, watch out that you do not lose your power by being humbled.

If being prideful is because of your bank account, watch out because it can be brought down. If being prideful is about building your success around people and what others think about you, and how popular you can be, watch out that you aren’t isolated at some time in your life. If being prideful is about your academics, there is always someone out there that is smarter than you and who would be ready to show what you don’t know.

So this humbling process is to bring us all to a place to do heart work, internal work, to look at our lives and to ask, ‘God, are you my ultimate? Are you the one that I want more than anything, or am I living for this popularity? Am I living for riches? Am I living for status? Am I living for power? Am I living for knowledge, or am I living to know you?’

And I would like to say, hopefully with a pregnant pause, a book like Obadiah, isn’t it amazing how relevant it is? Guess what? We are Edom. The heart of Edom lives in you and the heart of Edom lives in me. And we are capable of trying to build our pride up in the clefts of the rock and finding security in the wrong things of life. By finding security in relationships, finding security in all of our stuff. And God does not want us to make anything our ultimate. He is to be our ultimate-ultimate. So is God your ultimate this morning? Pride can always be detected in the areas that serve as our ultimate.

God never punishes unjustly. And it is important for us to remember that. And the following verses in Obadiah justify God’s justice, to share why He is going to punish
Edom. So let’s look at verse 10 where it says, “Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you.” So for their violence they are going to experience shame. We learn in verse 11 that justice is coming because of their passivity with Jerusalem’s captivity. “On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.” So they were passive while Jerusalem was going into captivity. They didn’t stand up for Jerusalem. They didn’t stand up for the oppressed.

And maybe some of you have found yourselves in a spot. You have built your identity, you feel good about yourself when you are in a conversation where others are being talked down about. It is kind of like you celebrate that. When others are being talked down about, it makes you feel better about yourself. But guess what? If you are building your identity around the put down of others in the name of feeling better about yourself, you are building the wrong kind of identity. And by the way, I am sure there are people out there talking about us somewhere. We just don’t have the privilege of being part of the conversation.

These things can be important because when we put our identity in what people are saying about us, or in popularity, or in riches, or in all these things, sometimes what happens is it is a very difficult to have it stripped away. But the stripping process, when we go through the humbling process and surrender to God, what we learn is a powerful lesson. We learn that we were putting our faith in the wrong place for security. And so good can come out of this humbling process because God cares more about our character than our status. He cares more about our holiness than how much stuff we have. He cares more about how low we are willing to go than how high we want to go.

So what we want to do then is we want to realize that God wants us to be a humble people. Yet we all struggle with shadow, this fallen nature where we look to feel better about ourselves through comparison. ‘I have more stuff than so and so, so I am better. I have a better job than so and so, so I am better. I have more friends than so and so, so I am better.’ And we go through life thinking if people talk good about me than I am better.

The reality is that we are all fallen. We are all flawed. We are all in desperate need of the gospel. We all desperately need Jesus. And when pride creeps into our hearts, if we are not careful the devil will create pride in areas where you least expect it. You will go through life being praised as a good person and you will come to believe that. And then you will start taking pride in the fact that you are a good moral person, and you are not like all the scrub brushes around you. Pride is so sneaky and it is so subtle. That is why we need to be posturing ourselves before God to protect ourselves.
So what has happened here with Edom is that God is humbling them for their passivity. And He also humbles them for celebrating their captivity. Look at verses 12 and 13. “But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin, do not boast in the day of distress. Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity, do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity. Do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity.”

They were cheering, they were having fun while others suffered. Have you ever felt good that someone got a bad grade? Or you felt good that they got pounded on playing sports? Or you felt good that others were talking about someone? Or you felt good that someone got what they deserved? And you feel like you are God’s partner in justice. You align with Him and think, ‘Yes God, do it.’ Justice is the thing that we want for everybody else except ourselves. And grace is the thing we don’t want for anyone but ourselves. It is a tricky world we live in. And these Edomites were celebrating.

It was probably similar to when Osama bin Laden was taken out by Seal Team Six in their forty minute mission. Perhaps he had thought that there in his little private escape place he was secure like the Edomites thought they were in the clefts of the rock. Perhaps he was confident that we were duped and that he would never be found. But he was taken and his body was dumped out in the sea. And after that happened, we in America celebrated. We went nuts.

And perhaps that was the wrong response. Yes, we should be glad that justice came and what Osama bin Laden had done was horrific, but what may have been the proper response was not one of celebration but a feeling of how sad that this kind of stuff ever had to happen to begin with. Perhaps we should have been sad that we live in such a broken fallen world that this kind of action would have ever been required to begin with. I am not saying that to minimize at all what happened, but I am just saying I think we are far too ready to celebrate in people’s weaknesses in sin, versus grief.

The Edomites were also humbled for willingly handing Jerusalem over to Babylon. Verse 14 says, “Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives, do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress.” They would just hand them over. So we have seen that the Edomites were passive, they celebrated, they handed over their own people, all kinds of reactions were going on. Different people were doing different things there in Edom.

But God’s humbling process is not limited to Edom. It extends to all nations in due time. Look at verse 15. “For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations, as you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.” No one can escape God’s ultimate judgment. We know that God desires mercy rather than
judgment. But I can’t teach the book of Obadiah without sharing the history of what went on there with the Edomites and God’s judgment to them.

God’s justice to Edom was thorough, yet He would graciously raise up His own people. In verses 16 through 21 we see that God thoroughly would deal with Edom and you won’t find a trace of those ancient peoples. They were dealt with. Judgment came their way. In verse 18 it says, “The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the Lord has spoken.”

And then in verse 21 we learn, “Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” What are these ‘saviors’ in plural? It is probably just judges in the future day when the Lord sets up His kingdom and we reign in peace. There will be these leaders, these judges, who will be great examples. These people will be rescuers, not plural ‘saviors’ in the sense of more Messiahs than one. It is clear there is but one Lord throughout this book.

Well, what can we learn when we think about this book of Obadiah? Before I bring out observations, let me remind you of what we have learned so far. We have learned that Obadiah was a prophet in the Old Testament. He was a Minor Prophet and it was probably written sometime between 585 and 550 BC. The best context to interpret it in would be when the Babylonians came and took God’s people out of Jerusalem into captivity. And what happened was Obadiah had a vision from God, and he writes to deal with the Edomites. And the Edomites had a problem. They found their security in the wrong places – in themselves, in their stuff, in their heights in the cliffs, in their military success, in their prosperity and in their wisdom.

And as a result, they got puffed up and prideful, and God justifiably told them through Obadiah that all that was going away, they were going to be humbled and their pride was going before destruction. They would end up being totally and completely humbled by God. And then those who ended up going into captivity, God’s people, they in the end would sit in the cliffs of the rock, so to speak, and they would be cared for. In due time God would raise up those who were brought down, and bring down those who thought they could never be brought down.

That is kind of the storyline we learned about in Obadiah. It is a story about the dangers of pride. And I think that I want to share in conclusion some reflections on pride. The first one is this: Pride grieves the heart of God. Obviously God hates pride. We see this in this book of Obadiah. He hates pride in the nation of Edom and He hates pride in the hearts of you and me. He knows that pride causes us to set ourselves apart from Him. But if pride grieves the heart of God, humility pleases the heart of God. God loves humility, a broken and contrite heart.
And every time that we bow our head before God with the proper motive, and not to just try and be religious, when we praise Him, when we bring our own sense of nothingness into His presence, He loves that because we are saying that we want to be Him-dependent. That is what God wants in our lives. That is what God wants in our homes, it is what God wants in our church, it is what God wants in our community. The reason the church gets a black eye in the community, the reason marriages fall apart, homes fall apart, businesses fall apart, is because we get prideful. We do things our own way. We believe the wrong press about ourselves instead of humbling ourselves.

The Scriptures tells us if we humble ourselves He will lift us up. So the very thing that we want is to be raised up. And you get raised up by bowing down. But it is a good kind of raising up. It is a kind of raising up that just wants to say, ‘Bless God. To God be the glory. To Him be the glory. It is all for His sake. Nothing good comes out of me.’ And it just gets to be a big brag fest as we are raised up. We should want God to raise us up, and we should want to be able to glorify Him.

I remember a couple of years ago when my book, ‘The Fifth Gospel’ came out. I was praying this prayer, ‘God, help my character to be bigger than my platform.’ That has become a prayer in my life. I would much rather have a massive size character in a little bitty platform, than a big platform and small character. If there is one thing that I want to have as a pastor is a holy humble heart after God; fallen yes, but thirsting for Him.

I don’t want to be in a church that the higher up you go, if you don’t have the character to match the platform size, it is just going to be a louder smack. So I would beg for your prayers, as someone who serves as one of the pastors here, that God would protect my heart from pride. What you should want from your staff and your elders is humility in leadership. And let me just be the first to say while I am at it, that it is kind of silly for us to be prideful when the very things that we see coming into our life is just because of His goodness and His grace. I am breathing right now at His expense by His grace. I can see by the grace of God. I can hear by the grace of God. I can teach by the grace of God. He gave me a mind to learn these things. I couldn’t pass a test to get into the United States Army for crying out loud. The fact that I am standing up here teaching today is only by His grace.

So pride grieves the heart of God. Secondly, guard against the kind of pride that devalues others in the name of patriotism, or what I might call Edomism. The Edomites felt prideful, felt better than the Jerusalem group of people. And you know I believe there is sort of a sad kind of patriotism that goes on in American Christianity that gets on my nerves. I am all for being thankful to be an American. I have traveled to lots of different countries and this is still a wonderful place to live. I mean I would much rather live here than in North Korea. America, despite all of its moral depravity, is still a great
place to live if you want to talk about freedoms. But the thing that I would want to say is sometimes we get so patriotic that we just think that we are God’s special tribe here on earth.

And what I want us to remember is that God loves all people. And God loves all nations. I want to pray for our soldiers but you know what, I also want to pray for these other nations who are at war, because God loves all people. We are the human race and we start getting prideful in our nation, and in our race, or in our city, or our state, and it is wrong. We need to love the poor and the rich, all the different ethnicities and all the nations. Our hearts need to pound God’s pound.

So I want to say that we need to be thankful that we are Americans, but there are people that have to wake up in other countries, and they need to be thankful that they are North Korean because that is where they live and they can’t get anywhere else. They need to find a place in their heart to say ‘Thank you. Thank you, God, that you can work no matter where I am at.’ A lot of time we are interpreting the Bible and our governmental party in the same hand. Be thankful for the fact that you are an American, vote and be diligent in that and have a voice, but our first and foremost passion is to be like Jesus Christ and living for Him. And let this world know that God loves all people. So be patriotic, but be humble.

Third, don’t take comfort in your pride. God has a way of humbling us no matter how secure we feel. That is a lesson we can see whether we are in the clefts of the rock, or wherever we think we are hiding out.

Fourth, pay attention when life unnecessarily frustrates you. Ask if pride is going on in my heart. Sometimes life just starts feeling really frustrated and you can be right in the middle of God’s will, and it will still frustrate you as well at times. I am not saying it won’t. But there are times where we just kind of feel like something deep is going on, and it could be when we constantly feel a sense of frustration with ourselves and with others, that God is trying to get our attention. And He is trying to humble us. He is trying to bring us to a place of surrender. And the areas where we get most passionate and most justified and most arrogant about, perhaps those are the areas where God is trying to loosen our grip.

And what if these prods that we are ignoring are God’s gentle way of getting our attention? We know that pride goes before destruction, and what if God can see the end, and He is trying to get our attention through our reactions, through our frustrations, but we keep ignoring it? We need to pay attention when life unnecessarily frustrates. Ask yourself if pride is growing in your heart. I would encourage you to go and ask God, ‘Do I have an Edomite heart within me?’ And if you feel like that is true, you need to ask Him to forgive you, and do a humble cleanse before Him.
Fifth and final, and this is my favorite point, no pride is beyond the reach of God’s gospel saving love. We did see that redemption would ultimately come to God’s people again. But at the same token, interpreting this chapter in light of the grand narrative of Scripture, we learn that pride from the very beginning with the rebellion in the Garden showed that God was immediately on the scene, pursuing. And that is the story.

If you are here today on one side you may be feeling kind of convicted, you may be feeling frustrated. On the other side, what is great about that is that conviction is a tool of God’s mercy. It is saying, ‘Come on.’ It is kind of like something trying to chip a hard rock or ice, and you don’t like the chipping feeling, but it is God wanting to be a sculptor to sculpt us. And we have to surrender to that.

So I want to ask you this morning if you have recognized God’s gospel saving love? Do you know what is beautiful about Jesus? What we want to do is go up like the Edomites, but what God did was make Jesus, who was up, come down in the form of man to die on a cross for our sins. We get prideful; Jesus became humble. We want riches; Jesus left His riches. We want power; Jesus didn’t call on His power. We want popularity; Jesus was betrayed by even His closest friends. We want allies; Jesus was crucified by those who were His very own. In the gospel Jesus would come and He would die in our place for all of our pride. And all of our pride was laid on Him.

But guess what? There is no way around dealing with becoming a Christian but through the cross. We have to recognize what He did. We have to descend like He did in humility and we have to recognize our need of a Savior. That is what a Christian does, they bow down at the cross and they ask Jesus to save them. It was Jesus who was perfect dying for our imperfections. We have to recognize Him and acknowledge that we should have been on the cross and then we bow down. We become humble and we ask forgiveness for our pride and we surrender our lives to Him.

And then when we believe on Him just as He arose on the third day He will raise us up when we die. We will all get raised up in due time when we believe in Him, but it is not about our glory and it is not about us being raised up. We will just be raised up to be in a place where there will be true peace, true joy, true grace and true love.

The way to forgiveness of pride is through humility. And the way to humility is through a cross. And the way to the cross is by seeing a person who humbled Himself and became like us to die for our sins. Let’s pray.

Father, thank you for your word. I pray that you will use it to be a great source of encouragement today. It has been pretty neat to see how you have used this series of ‘One Hit Wonders’ ending with Obadiah, and to learn the message that is in the words of these one chapter books. Thank you that all Scripture is relevant. Thank you that we can
always relate because it is relevant as we are all people with the same issues. Thank you, God, for showing us your grace.

I pray for anyone here today who doesn’t know you. If that is you and you want your sins forgiven, just say this from the quietness of your heart: *Jesus, thank you for coming down to die on a cross for my sins and for dying for all of my pride. Forgive me for my heart of Edom. I pray that you will meet me and forgive me of my sins. I thank you that you rose from the grave. I surrender my life to you right here and right now. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*