

Strongholds That Are Not Strong

Text : **Obadiah**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. Though the smallest book in the O.T. , Obadiah has much to teach us.**
1. **Rom. 15:4-** For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction,
 2. It's a message straight from God.
 - a. **"The vision of Obadiah."**
 - b. **"Thus says the Lord concerning Edom—"**
 3. The principles set forth in this book are as eternal as the God who inspired them.
Heb. 13:8- Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
- B. In our previous lesson we observed the consequences of Edom's pride. (all pride)**
1. It distorts one's view :
 - a. of himself
 - b. of other people
 - c. of God
 2. It puts one in conflict with God.
 3. It brings frustration in this life and removes all hope of Heaven.
- C. With this lesson we want to further observe that pride causes one to trust in strongholds that are not strong. (self-deception = false hope)**
1. Natural Defenses
 2. Worldly Riches
 3. Military Might , even in Alliances
 4. Earthly Wisdom

**Just as these principles applied to ancient Edom,
We'll see they are equally applicable to us today. Afghanistan**

I. Trust in natural defenses is a stronghold that is not strong. Vs. 3-4

- A. The capitol of Edom was naturally one of the most secure cities on earth.**
1. It was situated in a basin surrounded by high walls. (**mountainous country**)
 2. The only approach was through a mile long gorge with high walls. (**200 ft.**)
 - a. No wider more than 20 meters wide at any point.
 - b. In some places the walls almost touched each other. (**pass single file**)
 3. Legion has it that 24 Edomite warriors once held back an entire army in that gorge.

B. Despite their fantastic natural defenses God brought Edom down.

1. They were conquered by Solomon. (Subsequent Jewish rulers)
2. They were conquered by Tiglath-pileser. (Assyria)
3. They were conquered by Caesar. (Rome) (**eventually totally destroyed**)

C. Similarly, the French thought the City of Quebec was secured by its location.

1. They thought no one could get past the high cliffs.
2. Gen. James Wolfe led British forces to a victory over them. (1759)
3. This battle effectively cost the French their holdings in the “New France.”

D. The United States is protected by large oceans on each coast.

1. Historically, we have always felt secure knowing that no one could invade us.
2. During both world wars we were spared devastation because of our natural defenses.
3. **9-11** proved that our trust in our natural defenses was misplaced.

E. Obadiah continually reminds us that NO ONE is out of the reach of God.

1. **Vs. 4** - ... “**Though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,**” declares the LORD. (**explain hyperbole**)

2. We must never forget ... Jesus is the “King of kings.”
Now and forever, He reigns over all nations.

Dan. 4:17- This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men.

3. **Compare ... Read ... Amos 9: 1-6**

- a. **Acts 17: 26-28** ... He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, **27** that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; **28** for in Him we live and move and exist, ...

- b. Compare ... **Isa. 14: 12-16**

4. **We must acknowledge that God reigns and ONLY He can lift up a nation.**

- a. **Prov. 14:34** - Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.
- b. *In these tumultuous times, we must not lose sight of who controls outcomes.*
- c. **This is also applies to outcomes in any congregation of God's people.**

II. Trust in riches is a stronghold that is not strong. Vs. 5-6**A. Edom was a rich country.**

1. It sat on one of the most well-traveled trade routes of the ancient world.
 - a. All northern trade with Egypt went through Edom.
 - b. They sat up tollbooths along the way and supplied the caravans.
2. They were an exporting country.
 - a. They raised wool and weaved it into quality fabric.
 - b. They were skilled at dying their material. (**good dye was rare**)
3. They were a banking center.
 - a. Trade routes and commerce provided customers.
 - b. Their location provided banks security.

B. Though rich, God brought Edom to absolute poverty.

1. Crop raiders were common in those days.
 - a. Crop raiders would not take everything.
 - b. They would grab only what was convenient and leave the rest.
 - c. God sent those who took everything ... starvation resulted.
2. Raiders repeatedly came in and took people as slaves.
 - a. They took so many few were left.
 - b. The remaining people fled south into the desert of Idumea where they perished.
 - c. Compare ... **Isa. 34: 5-17, Jer. 49:17-22, Ezek. 12-14, Mal. 1: 1-5**

C. Many great empire nations have fallen when they were at their richest level.

1. Assyria
2. Babylon
3. Rome (*Rome was brought down by poor people with inferior technology.*)
4. The colonial powers rose high and fell swiftly ... France, Spain, England

D. America cannot get so rich that God cannot bring her down.

1. **Remember ... Luke 12:16-21** ... The rich man thought he was secure for life.
2. In one year we have gone from the strongest economy to one tittering on collapse.
3. Job realized the reality of the human condition :

Job 1:21- He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked
I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

3. In these times of doubt and fear, we must learn the lesson of Obadiah
And humble ourselves before the might hand of God. (*nation & church*)

III. Trust in military might and alliances is a stronghold that is not strong.

A. Vs. 7 ... By making powerful allies, Edom sought to secure itself.

1. They sought to buy friends by giving foreign aide.
2. Foreign aide is brotherly conduct, but not a means of buying friends.
3. Loyalty cannot be purchased. (*It can be rewarded.*)

B. There is no army too strong for God to destroy with only a word.

1. The army of Egypt was mighty, but God drowned them all in the sea. (**Gen. 14**)
2. The mighty Armenian army was defeated by no more than a sound. (**II Kg 6**)
3. **II King 6: 17** ... Elisha showed his servant the heavenly hosts above the city.

C. America’s security does not rest in our awesome military might or alliances.

1. America spends billions on weapons,
 - a. Planes
 - b. Aircraft Carriers
 - c. Missiles and missile defense systems-- but God can defeat any army w/o these.
2. Our president goes all over the world begging people to like us.
 - a. We do not become stronger if more people like us.
 - b. We cannot buy peace. (**A conquering nation cannot be bought off.**)
 - c. Appeasement has never worked. (**BUT** *God has never failed.*)

D. America must realize the source of it’s power and prosperity. GOD !!

1. We need the army of God protecting us, **not** tanks, planes and ships.
2. We need to seek the favor of the one who controls outcomes, **not** our enemies.

E. Likewise, the church must realize the source of it’s strength.

1. NOT from numbers, beautiful facilities, dynamic ministries, **but from God.**
2. Only God can add or remove a lampstand (**Rev 2**) or give increase (**I Cor 3**)

V. Trust in worldly wisdom is a stronghold that is not strong. Vs. 8**A. Edom was renowned for it's wise men.**

1. **Job 2:1** ... Elipaz came from Edom to counsel Job. (*Teman is Edom.*)
2. **Jer. 49: 7-** Concerning Edom. Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman? Has good counsel been lost to the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?"

B. Education is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master and an even worse savior.

1. One should get all the education he can, but it does **not** make him a better servant.
2. **Read ... I Cor. 1: 17 - 2: 16**
3. The wisdom that God wants flows from a maturing FAITH. (**love for God**)

C. It is not advanced knowledge that brings one close to God.

1. It is faith that brings a Christian closer to God. (**informed , life-changing trust**)
2. It is not finely crafted arguments that wins souls.
 - a. **The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.**
 - b. Salvation is by faith in the gospel ... **NOT** persuasive arguments.

CONCLUSION :**A. As a church and as a nation we must realize what makes us truly secure.**

1. It is not our natural abilities, natural resources or natural defenses.
2. It is not our wealth that makes us secure. **Wealth can be gone in an instant.**
3. It is not our military might or our alliances in which we can trust.
4. It is not our vast learning and ability to out reason others that will save us.

B. It is God who controls all outcomes.

1. **"If God is for us, who is against us?"**
2. God reigns supreme over all creation.
3. If God wills anything, it happens. **He is the creator and the sustainer of all.**
4. **The key to success is pleasing God. James 4:10**

INVITATION :

Are you living by faith in the almighty or leaning on yourself .. **a bruised reed** .. **II Kg 18:21**