

Violence against Your Brother

Obadiah 1: 10-14

Ps. Too Teh Hsin

As Christians, we have a responsibility to defend others from violence, especially those in our natural and spiritual families.

1. Special responsibility for families (v10)

God abhors violence and injustice. Christians should be part of the solution to protect rather than to watch passively or be the source of violence. The passage begins (v10) with a prophecy of judgement on the Edomites. There is a long history of bad blood between Edomites and Israelites. Hostility between 2 siblings grew into hostility between 2 families which in turn grew into hostility between 2 nations. Small sin grows to big sin. It is the same pattern within our families. It starts with small conflicts and if left unrepented, irritation will grow to hatred and violence. Is hostility growing in our family? Is irritation grating at our nerves? Is anger outburst becoming more often and easier? The problem is the sin in us! It is not primarily the other person. God is using him or her to bring out our sin so we may be set free. Pride gives us a false sense of superiority, but God wants families to treat each other with love and care. Edom disastrously failed to protect their brothers.

2. The descent into violence (v11-14)

The sin of Edom started small but snowballed towards violence against the Israelites -

Standing aloof (v11): The first step of violence is standing aloof when their brother nation is being ransacked. They were indifferent, with a 'don't care' attitude. Christians have a responsibility to care for our natural and spiritual family. If we can help, we help. If we can encourage, we encourage. If we can defend, we defend.

Gloat (v12): The Edomites were aloof when it came to helping. When it came to what was happening, they 'looked with delight' and they 'gazed on'. They would not help, but they were eager to find out the juicy details. Our responsibility is to help restore (*Gal 6:1*) the falling Christian brother we know. Pray for restoration.

Rejoice (v12b): *Do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin.* Whenever there is animosity, the sinful nature in us feels happy about the trouble of the other.

Boast(v12c): *Do not boast in the day of distress.* The final progression in the heart is boasting that leads to violence (v14). We boast because we believe we are better. We ought to humble ourselves and acknowledge that God has spared us though our sins are many. Let us boast in the Lord alone.

3. The path away from violence

How do we walk the path away from violence? Let's address 3 obstacles -

Pride: Jesus did not take pride in His divine status as the Son of God. Instead, He emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of

men. The least we can do is to lower our pride and share the gospel with others in love and earnest prayer.

Unforgiveness: The sins we have committed against God are far greater than the wrongs done to us. We can forgive because Jesus died on the Cross so we may be forgiven. *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Eph 4:32).*

Fear: We must overcome fear since getting involved in helping others may be risky. *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control (2 Tim 1:7)* If God is for us, who can be against us? We are more than conquerors through Jesus, who loved us.

We know we will fall even if we try harder. We too are sinners deserving of the judgement of God. We are like the fugitives running for our lives from a righteous God who holds sinners accountable. We may be able to escape from earthly risks. But who can protect us from the judgement of God? Where can we run to? The bad news - there is no escape! The good news - Jesus said in *John 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*