

‘A bowl of Stew!’

Relationships can be a wonderful blessing for everyone because we all need them. A husband and wife relationship can be a marvellous and rich blessing for both. The relationships which siblings have with each other can also be a great a source of blessings. The relationships we have with our friends and neighbours can often be a rich source of blessing.

Take for example the man who loved nothing more than to play his trumpet, he didn't care about the time of day because he didn't have a clock in his house. Keeping time wasn't all that important to him but if he ever wanted to know the time, he would simply start playing his trumpet and sure enough one of his neighbours would always yell from their window, ‘What's the idea, playing that thing at three-thirty in the morning?’

God has blessed us with different kinds of relationships in our lives. But the relationship we have with our family surely has to be the greatest blessing of all. God blessed Moses with a brother whose name was Aaron. Peter was blessed with a brother named Andrew and God blessed James with a brother named John. They helped each other throughout their lives and they were a real blessing to each other.

Sadly, being related to each other isn't always a blessing, we see this with Cain and Abel. And today I want to speak about two other brothers who didn't get on with each other, in fact they ended up becoming enemies of each other. We're going to look at the two brothers named Jacob and Esau.

Please turn your Bibles to the **Book of Obadiah**. Now there are thirteen men known as Obadiah in the Old Testament, and so we can't really identify any of them as the Obadiah of this book. We do know his name means, ‘**servant of the Lord**’ and from the nature of the book, we can see that he was loyal to his people, as he had huge concerns over the Edomites who have always been hostile towards God's people.

Now we're not going to go through the book verse by verse, but I'll try and give you a general overview of what it's about. God is now pronouncing His judgment upon the Edomites and so Obadiah's message begins with the condemnation of Edom, which was the nation that descended from Esau.

But before we get into God's judgment upon them, let me remind you of the life of Esau. His father was Isaac and his mother was Rebekah and **Genesis 25:24-25** tells us that ‘**When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so, they named him Esau.**’

And so, Esau was the first to be born and as the firstborn by Jewish law, he was entitled to twice as much of his father's inheritance as his younger brother Jacob, and upon Isaac's death he would assume the role as head of the family. But notice how much Esau valued his birthright.

Genesis 25:29-34 ‘**Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, ‘Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!’ (That is why he was also called Edom. Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’ ‘Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’ But Jacob said, ‘Swear to me first.’ So, he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So, Esau despised his birthright.**’

Esau being the manly man, the hunter, the great outdoor person, came in from hunting one day and was hungry. Jacob told him that he would give him a big bowl of stew that he had prepared in exchange for his birthright. And without any hesitation, Esau gave up his entire inheritance right there and then.

Now even though Esau was wrong in doing what he did, Jacob should never have taken advantage of the situation. Now remember what the Bible says when Jacob was being born, seconds later. **Genesis 25:26** ‘**After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so, he was named Jacob.**’

That phrase, ‘**grasping Esau's heel**’ is a Hebrew expression which means, he deceives, that's why Jacob's name means ‘**deceitful**’. And make no mistake about it, Jacob knew exactly what he was doing when he stole his brother's birthright. In fact, later on he and his mum, Rebekah were going to plot together to steal Esau's blessing as well.

And so, because of all this plotting and deception, Esau ended up hating his brother and planned to kill him after their father died.

Now Jacob was more of a mummy's boy, he loved to stay at home with his mum but when he found out what Esau was planning to do to him, he basically ran away for his life. Yes, Jacob was deceitful, but deep inside he had a heart that wanted to know God and follow Him. Esau was the opposite, in fact, in the Bible Esau is shown as the prime example of someone who lusts after the flesh. And oh, how he has a big following today, [doesn't he?](#)

[A minister and his family were walking down a street one day, and two women, wearing skimpy bikinis passed by. The minister remarked, 'How disgusting!' but his wife said, 'if it's so disgusting, why do you look? Then their 12-year-old son spoke up and said, 'I think Dad likes to be disgusted.'](#)

You only have to turn your TV on and see the advertisements for programmes like [Big Brother](#) or [Love Island](#) to see that our culture loves to be disgusted. And please know I'm not just speaking about sexual lust, I'm speaking all kinds of lusts of the flesh. People are lusting for pleasure, [why do you think places like Amsterdam and Ibiza are so popular with young people?](#) People are lusting for fame, [why do you think programmes like X-Factor and Britain's got talent are so popular?](#) People are lusting for wealth, [why do you think Dragons Den and The Apprentice are so popular?](#) People are lusting for beauty, [why do you think plastic surgery is so popular today?](#)

[1 John 2:15-16 'Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.'](#)

Esau is the prime example of people who are chasing after their fleshly desires. [Hebrews 12:15-17 'See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.'](#)

You see, when Esau finally realised how stupid he had been, he cried his heart out and begged Isaac to restore his birthright. But, despite all of his crying, Esau wasn't sorry for his worldly, selfish attitude, he was only sorry that he lost his inheritance.

And loved ones, that's the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. [2 Corinthians 7:10 'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.'](#) Real repentance means that you recognise that you've sinned against God and your left broken hearted for sinning against Him. And so, you want to change, you want to reconsider your actions and start following God's way.

But worldly repentance basically means you're just sorry that you got caught out. Esau was only sorry because he got caught in his lust and that he lost his inheritance, but he never had the desire to change. Later after Isaac died, the fulfilment of Esau's loss came to pass because Jacob had moved back home, and he and Esau had apparently reconciled. But notice what happened after they met.

[Genesis 36:6 'Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, as well as his livestock and all his other animals and all the goods he had acquired in Canaan and moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob.'](#)

Esau moved to another land some distance away from his brother. [Why did he move so far away?](#) Well, it certainly wasn't because he wanted to, no, he moved because the country that he had lived in all of his life now belonged to Jacob, and there wasn't enough room for both of them.

And so, as you can imagine Esau is fuming, he's raging with anger, but he realises there's nothing he could do about it. Esau, the first-born son, who lost his birthright through foolishness, was forced to move from his homeland and die in a foreign land.

Now you might be thinking [what does all this have to do with the Book of Obadiah?](#) You see, the Edomites were descendants of Esau and the Bible tells us that this hatred never stopped, even when both of them died.

Listen to what God says about the Edomites in [Ezekiel 35:5 'Because you harboured an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity, the time their punishment reached its climax.'](#)

Remember Ezekiel is writing whilst he's in exile, and he says that Edom's hatred for Israel is 'ancient', in other words it's been there for years and years. Someone once said that 'carrying a grudge is like a run in a woman's tights, it can only get worse'.

All the way through Old Testament history, we read about how the Edomites mistreated and murdered God's people. The first incident occurred soon after Israel became a nation. You remember what happened when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, **don't you?** They came to Edom and asked if they could pass through their land and promised that they wouldn't touch any of vineyards, crops, or even take any water from their wells.

Moses speaks to them as brothers, but the king of Edom says no to his brothers and gives them a warning. **Numbers 20:18 'But Edom answered: 'You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword.'** And if you read on, you'll see that they brought out their army to show Israel that they meant business.

Now think about this for a moment, this whole event took place over 400 years after Esau and Jacob parted ways. Talk about holding on to a grudge, Esau's unforgiveness still lingered. Now that was just the start of Edom's sin against God's people.

Obadiah 10-11 'Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed. On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.'

Obadiah tells Edom that God is going to judge them for their violence toward Jacob. Like I said, the Edomites had a long history of showing violence toward Israel and one of those times was when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem. When Jerusalem was being destroyed, listen to what the Psalmist says they were doing. **Psalm 137:7 'Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. 'Tear it down,' they cried, 'tear it down to its foundations!'**

So that hatred went on for years and years, but it didn't stop there. Even when we come to the New Testament, we're introduced to a man named Herod the Great. He was the one who tried to kill the newly born Jesus by slaughtering all the baby boys under two years old. His son, Herod Antipas was the one who murdered John the Baptist. His grandson, Herod Agrippa was the one who killed James the brother of Jesus and tried to kill Simon Peter.

You see, all these men were Edomites, and they constantly persecuted God's people who were descendants of Jacob. The Jewish historian, Josephus says that when the Romans stormed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and ravaged the city, the Edomites joined in and helped massacre thousands of Jews whilst torturing others.

Loved ones, all this happened over 1800 years after Jacob and Esau had parted company. Esau's descendants still hadn't learned to forgive Jacob and as a result, that hatred grew and all they wanted vengeance.

Hebrews 12:14-15 'Seek peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one can ever see the Lord. Be careful that no one is deprived of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness should begin to grow and make trouble; this can poison a large number'

Let me ask you, **are you are hurting over things that are unfair?** It's interesting that the Holy Spirit chose the metaphor of a root to speak about bitterness, because you don't see the roots. We see the stalk, we see the branch, we see the trunk, we even see the fruit, but we don't see the roots. Well that's exactly how bitterness operates, bitter people rarely realise that they are and even rarer, they won't admit they are.

You see bitterness is an underground sin, it festers, it grows, it's poisonous but no one really sees it. In fact, if you say to somebody your problem is bitterness, they'll probably get angry and deny it with all their being. But the indisputable fact of the matter is this, loved ones, there are an awful lot of sour saints. Saints who have held on to something which happened years ago and haven't let go and let God.

Let's go ahead and see what God's judgment was against Edom. **Obadiah 3 'The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights.'** God says that Edom was filled with pride. You see, there was a part of Edom that was practically impossible for any enemy to penetrate and that was the capital city of Petra. The word Petra means 'rock' and it's easy to see how it got its name.

Petra was an isolated fortress only accessible through a deep canyon, with high mountain walls all around.

In fact, history tells us that Petra was so treacherous to approach that it could defend itself against an army using only twelve men. We can imagine how proud they were of their fortress, they are so proud of it that Obadiah mentions the ‘**mountains of Esau**’ four times in the text. Oh, how much more powerful they thought they were above the nations around them!

Obadiah 3 ‘You who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’ The Edomites thought there were so great, so powerful, so mighty that nobody could bring them down. But oh, how wrong they were, they were going to be brought down to planet Earth with a thud by God Himself.

In **Proverbs 6** we find Solomon writing about the six things which the Lord hates and notice what’s first on His hate list. **Proverbs 6:17** ‘**Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.**’

The first sin on God’s hate list is ‘**haughty eyes**’, in other words, people who are full of themselves. And loved ones, make no mistake about it, this can happen even within the Lord’s church, where you have Christians, who think they are God’s gift to the church.

1 Corinthians 4:7 ‘For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?’ Paul asks, **who made you the way you are, with all of your gifts and abilities?** And the answer is, God made you the way you are, He gave you the talents you have.

Paul asks, **what did you do to earn all of your intellect or personality or beauty?** And the answer is nothing, you did absolutely nothing, God gave them to you. And Paul asks, **if everything that you are is a gracious gift from God, what are you bragging about?** Loved ones, this is why God hates pride so much, because pride takes all the credit for what God has done.

It was pride that caused Satan to be kicked out of Heaven. It was pride that caused Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, because she wanted to be like God. It was pride that caused the nations to be scattered to the ends of the earth at the tower of Babel. It was pride that caused Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass like ox and caused his hair to grow like eagles’ feathers and his nails to grow like birds’ claws.

It was pride that caused the rich fool to think he had plenty to keep him going, I’m just going to chill out, eat drink and be merry, he thought to himself. It was pride that caused the disciples to argue over which one of them was the greatest. It was pride that caused Herod to accept the praises of men as if he were God and to be struck dead and be eaten by worms. And it will be pride that will cause the man of sin to sit in the temple and demand to be worshipped as God.

You see, the Edomites were so proud of their invincibility against any attackers. They were convinced that there wasn’t a nation in the world that could take them down, but oh, how they forgot about God.

Obadiah 8-9 ‘In that day,’ declares the LORD, ‘will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau? Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau’s mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.’

God told Edom that one day they would be slaughtered, which basically means they would cease to exist as a nation. And this process began around 300 A.D. when a group of Arabs conquered their holy capital city of Petra. Over the year other nations came along and attacked them until finally they were completely destroyed by the Romans around A.D. 70. And so, the Edomites who were a people full of hatred and full of pride were finally judged by God and they ceased to be a nation.

Now please remember the Book of Obadiah isn’t all about the Edomites judgement. **Obadiah 15** ‘The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.’

Notice that the judgment of the day of the Lord isn’t spoken against Edom, the day of the Lord is near for all the nations. The day of the Lord will come upon all the nations, all people are going to stand under judgment. And so, Edom now represents all the peoples and nations that stands against the Lord. They will reap what they sow, what they have done to others is what God is going to do to them.

Years and years of hostility, all because of a bowl of stew.

Let me ask you, **what's in your bowl? Is it filled with self-sufficiency?** 'Oh, I don't need to study the Bible that much, I know enough to get by!' 'I don't need to pray that often to God because He knows what I need anyway!' 'I don't need to spend that much time with my church family, I'm strong enough to make it on my own!'

Proverbs 16:18 'Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.'

What's in your bowl? Is it filled with arrogance? Maybe your bowl is full of Bible knowledge but instead of using that knowledge to bless others, you use it to intimidate others as if you have some kind of spiritual superiority over others.

You see, how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ affects our relationship with the Lord. **1 Corinthians 8:12 'When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.'**

What's in your bowl? Is it filled with revelry? Nothing gives you satisfaction like seeing someone you don't, like making a mess of their lives.

Proverbs 24:17-18 'Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice, or the LORD will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them.' God can only fill those who aren't already filled with themselves.

Judas traded in his salvation for thirty pieces of silver, Esau traded in his inheritance for a bowl of stew. But what about you, **what are you willing to trade for your soul?**

Many years ago, there was a film called '**Crossroads**', it was about a young musician named Eugene who wants to become a famous blues guitarist. He's investigating a story about a long-lost song and so he asks the legendary Blues musician Willie Brown to help him, but Willie demands to free him from the old-people's prison first. Anyway, after he breaks him free from prison and they start travelling, it comes to light that Willie had actually made a deal with the devil at the crossroads. He basically traded his soul in order for him to become a famous blues guitarist and the rest of the film is about him trying to win his soul back.

You see, Satan has everything he needs to make a trade and He's ready to make a trade for your soul today. **Matthew 16:26 'What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?'**

What are you willing to trade for your soul? You see, we're supposed to influence the world, but my fear is that the world is influencing us. We're making priorities out of things the world is making priorities out of and we're trusting in things the world is trusting in.

Some are trading in their soul for wealth, some are trading in their soul for their family. Some are trading in their soul for work, and others are trading in their soul for good health. I'm not saying these things aren't important, but I am saying that God needs to be priority number one.

The world is trying to squeeze God out of our society because they don't want to be reminded how sinful they are. And what Satan is trying to do with Christians is squeeze God out of our lives. We're so busy with our lives, it's at the point where we're trying to squeeze God back into our lives.

I believe most of us are at the stage where we need to get down on our knees and ask God for forgiveness for allowing the world to influence us to such an extent that we only give Him a few hours a week out of our lives. And there's really only one way to stop pride ruling in our lives, there's only really one way to ensure God stays number one in our lives and that's to recognise that everything we have comes from Him.

We all need to get down on our knees and thank Him every day, for providing, our wealth, our families, our jobs and our health.