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THE  
"NOT SO BAD"  
SIN

**AND HOW IT'S KEEPING  
YOU FROM GOD**

**DR. J. VERNON MCGEE**

# THE "NOT SO BAD" SIN

## AND HOW IT'S KEEPING YOU FROM GOD

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, but its brevity doesn't mean it's less important for us today. Obadiah's message is founded upon the relationship between two brothers—Jacob and Esau. Remember them? What you may not recall is God's reaction to their lifelong conflict.

In an odd verse tucked inside another Old Testament prophetic book, we discover God said, *"I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."* What a strange thing for God to say. What does it mean? This little book of Obadiah is the only place we find out why God hated Esau.

Here's a preview: God hated Esau because of his pride.

*Really?* you might say. *Is that all? Just pride?* Pride makes very little impression on us today, because we have lost our sense of the proportion of sin.

Pride says, "I can live without God." Let's find out what God thinks of that.

Edom is the key to the little book, but who is he? To determine the identity of Edom, we must go back to Genesis:

***Now this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom....So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom. And this is the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir.*** –Genesis 36:1, 8, 9

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, just as the Israelites are the descendants of Jacob.

The story of Esau and Jacob is that of twin brothers, sons of Isaac and Rebekah. The boys were not identical twins; in fact, they were opposites. We first meet them in utero, when Rebekah is about to give birth:

***But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."***  
–Genesis 25:22, 23

From the very beginning, these two brothers struggled against each other. Esau was an outdoor fellow who loved to hunt. Jacob would rather stay in the house and learn to cook. He was tied to his mama's apron strings. However, Jacob had a spiritual discernment that Esau did not have. Esau was a man of the flesh and did not care for spiritual things.

***And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?" Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.*** –Genesis 25:30-34

Esau didn't sell his birthright because he was so hungry he was about to perish or because there wasn't anything else to eat in the house. No, he sold his birthright out of a desire of the flesh; he was willing to trade all of his spiritual heritage for a whim of the moment. The man who had the birthright was the priest of his family. He had a covenant from and relationship with God. In effect Esau said, "I would rather have a bowl of soup than a relationship with God."

This illustrates a great truth for believers today. In Galatians 5:17 Paul says, "For the flesh lusts [wars] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." These are the two natures inside every believer—the new nature and the old nature—and they are opposed to each other. Esau pictures the flesh (the old nature) and Jacob pictures the spirit (the new nature).

Having seen Esau in the first book of the Old Testament, we look now at the last book of the Old Testament and read this strange language:

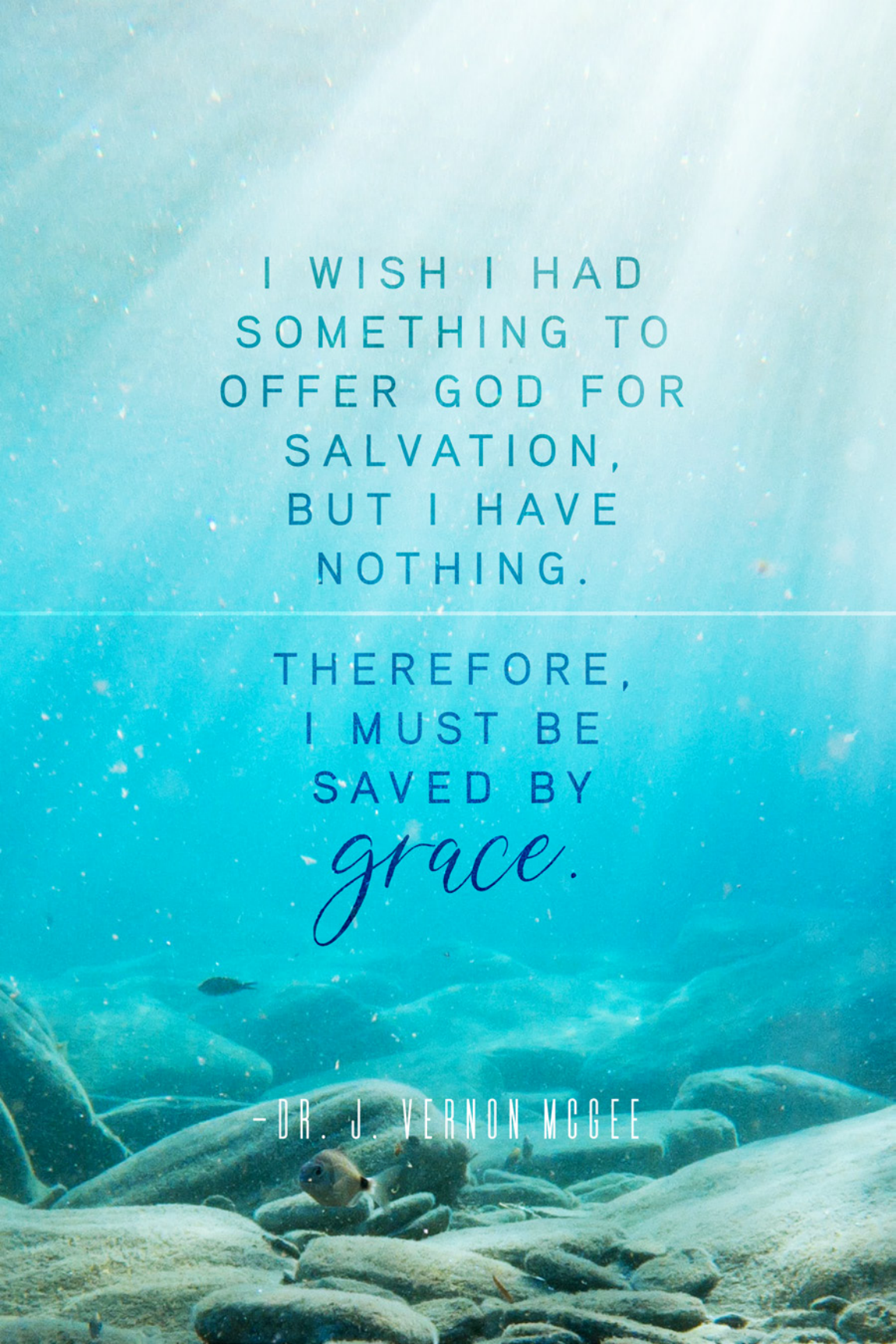
***"I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated ...."***—Malachi 1:2, 3

*"I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."* What a strange thing for God to say. What does it mean?

The little book of Obadiah is the only place we find the explanation of why God hated Esau.

***"Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after!"***—Obadiah 6

Louis Ginsburg, the great Hebrew scholar, translated Obadiah 6: "How are the things of Esau stripped bare!"



I WISH I HAD  
SOMETHING TO  
OFFER GOD FOR  
SALVATION,  
BUT I HAVE  
NOTHING.

THEREFORE,  
I MUST BE  
SAVED BY  
*grace.*

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

Obadiah is God's microscope focused on Esau, and when you look through the eyepiece you see *Edom*. Just as you inflate a tire to find a tiny leak in it, Obadiah presents Esau inflated so you can see where the flaw is in his life and discover why God said He hated him.

The nation that came from Esau became godless. What at the beginning was a little pimple under the skin is now a raging and angry cancer. What was small in Esau is now magnified 100,000 times in the nation. Edom turned its back upon God.

***“Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised.”*** –Obadiah 2

The Edomites were a great people, but Obadiah looks into the future and gives the prophecy: Edom will be brought down. And from where we stand today, we see it has been fulfilled.

So what was the great sin of Edom that brought about God's judgment?

***“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’”*** –Obadiah 3

*Pride*. I am confident this takes the wind out of the sails of many readers who say, “Is that *all*? Pride is bad, but it's not that bad, is it?” Actually, pride makes very little impression on us today, because we have lost our sense of the proportion of sin.

We think pride is a nice, polite sin. Good people indulge in this. You do not have to get down in the gutter to be filled with pride. Or do you?

I say to you, pride is the sin of sins! Pride of heart is deeper and darker than any other sin you can mention. We do not condemn it, but *God* does! God says He resists the proud, but He is always on the side of the humble. “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I

hate” (Proverbs 8:13). John tells us that “the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). Where does the pride of life come from? If there is anything that comes from the devil, that is it.

A great many saints today have pride of race, pride of face, and even pride of grace—they are proud they have been saved by grace! My friend, your salvation ought not to make you proud; it is not even something to brag about. It is something about which to glorify God. It should *humble* you. Aren’t you ashamed of yourself that you have to be saved by grace because you are such a miserable sinner? I wish I had something to offer God for salvation, but I have nothing. Therefore, I must be saved by grace, and I cannot even boast of that. There are too many folk boasting of the fact that they have been sinners. God gives grace to the *humble*. Paul writes, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). What kind of mind did He have? Lowliness of mind. He said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle [meek] and lowly in heart...” (Matthew 11:29).

Pride is destroying the testimony of many Christians and has made them ineffective for God. They go in for show, but they are building nothing more than a big haystack. They are not building on the foundation of Christ with gold and silver and precious stones. (See 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.) Pride has a great many saints pinned to the mat by the shoulders, down for the count of ten.

Pride was the sin of Satan. He said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14).

Pride was also the root of Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity. He strutted like a peacock in the palace of his kingdom of Babylon. “The king spoke, saying, ‘Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?’” (Daniel 4:30). And what happened to

Nebuchadnezzar? “While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field ...’” (Daniel 4:31, 32). That was no accident, my friend. This man did not know who he was, and he went out and acted like an animal of the field. Why? Because when a man is lifted up with pride, he’s not lifted *up* but has come *down* to the level of beasts. God debased Nebuchadnezzar and brought him down to the level of the beasts.

What is pride? Pride of heart is the attitude of a life that declares its ability to live without God.

***“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’”*** –Obadiah 3

Esau lived in the rock-hewn city of Petra. Have you seen it? It’s protected by a very narrow entryway and is easily defended. Many nations deposited vast sums of gold and silver there because they felt the city could never be taken.

But the Edomites lived in a false security. Pride of heart had lifted up this nation of Edom just like Esau who despised his birthright. Even though there was plenty to eat in the home of Isaac, Esau liked that bowl of soup more than he liked his birthright. In despising that birthright, he despised God. And now Esau had become a great nation that in its abundance and pride declared its ability to live without God. They signed a declaration of independence; they seceded from the government of God; they revolted and rebelled against Him.

Friend, when a little creature down here gets to the place where he says, “I don’t need God,” God says, “*That’s* what I hate.”

What does God do in a case like this?



WHEN GOD MADE HUMANS,  
HE DIDN'T PUT A STEERING WHEEL  
ON ANY OF US. *WHY?*

BECAUSE ONCE YOU HAVE  
TURNED TO HIM FOR SALVATION,  
*HE WANTS TO GUIDE YOUR LIFE.*

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE



***“Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there will I bring you down,” says the LORD.*** –Obadiah 4

The eagle is used in Scripture as a symbol of God’s care. In fact, it was used of God when He called His people out of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai, saying, “You have seen ... how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself” (Exodus 19:4). The eagle is also used in Scripture as a symbol of deity. The Edomites were going to overthrow God and attempt to become deity. They were going to handle the business that God is supposed to handle.

How many people today attempt to run their lives as if they were God? The interesting thing is that when God made humans, He didn’t put a steering wheel on any of us. Why? Because once you have turned to Him for salvation, *He* wants to guide your life. When we try to run our own lives, we put ourselves in God’s rightful place. That is pride, and it’s a fatal sin because it leads to a lost eternity.

Remember, Edom is Esau magnified. So look at Esau and you see ugly, human animalism in the raw. May I say to you, friend, the horrible truth is that when man attempts to live without God, he is lower than animals. That’s just how they were living in Edom in Obadiah’s day. So the book of Obadiah is God’s devastating answer to evolution. What consummate conceit for a man who is living apart from God to think he has evolved from an animal when he instead lives like one!

A little boy from a Christian home was invited by the neighbors to have dinner with them. When he sat down at their table, he bowed his head from force of habit. Then, when he heard no thanks being returned, he looked up and saw the food being passed. He didn’t want to miss anything, so he looked around and started reaching. But since he had no inhibitions, he asked them, “Don’t you all thank God for your food?” They were embarrassed for a moment but then said, “No.” The little fellow thought a minute and then said, “Why, you are just like my dog. You just start in!”

There are multiplied numbers of people who live like animals in our day, my friend. Obadiah is God's withering answer to man who, in his conceit, boasts, "I have come from an animal, and just look at me now!" God says, "Where have you been? I created you in My image, and you fell so low that you are below the animal world." When your heart is so filled with pride that you declare your ability to live without God, you are an animal. That is Edom, and God says He hates it.

I call your attention now to the conflict:

***"The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau," for the LORD has spoken.*** –Obadiah 18

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another ..." (Galatians 5:17). There will be ultimate, final judgment of Esau. I believe that "the house of Esau" will not enter into the eternal kingdoms of this earth which will become the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What is it that keeps them from being there? Pride of heart. Friend, if it is your decision to live without God, you are going to live without Him not only now but throughout eternity.

***Then saviors [deliverers] shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.***

–Obadiah 21

Today God is moving forward unhesitatingly toward the accomplishment of His purpose—that is, of putting His King on Mount Zion. He says He will turn and turn and overturn the nations until He comes whose right it is to rule (see Ezekiel 21:27). No thing or person on earth can stop Him. He is moving today to victory—the kingdom is the Lord's!

There is only One who can lift the heads of men and women walking through life with their heads down like animals. Evolution has not lifted mankind one inch. The deadly poison of godless materialism and humanism will bring upon us nothing but God's judgment. God says, *"Though you be lifted up, little man, I'll bring you down."*

But He also says, through the lips of His Son, our Savior:


***"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."*** –John 12:32

Which way are you going, my friend? Down the way of pride, unbelief, and rebellion—? You, who were made in the likeness of God, can be restored. Lay aside your pride and come in helplessness to the Savior. He alone can lift you up.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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