

Obadiah 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

Analysis

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? God identifies the root of Edom's sin: pride. The Hebrew **驕^תן** (zedon libbeka, "pride of your heart") indicates arrogant presumption rooted deep within. The verb **שָׁבַת** (hissi, "has deceived") reveals pride's essential nature—it is self-deception, blinding people to reality. Pride convinces us of our own security, sufficiency, and invulnerability, all of which are lies.

Edom's pride was geographically rooted: "thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock" (שָׁכַנִּי בְּחָגְיִסְלָע, shokni vechagvei-sela). Edom's capital Sela (later Petra) was carved into rose-red sandstone cliffs, accessible only through narrow gorges easily defended. "Whose habitation is high" (מְרוּם שְׁבָתוֹ, merom shivto) describes mountain fortresses that seemed impregnable. This natural security bred false confidence: "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (מַיִם יָרִידֵנִי אֶרֶץ, mi yorideni aretz). The rhetorical question expects the answer "no one"—Edom believed itself invincible.

This passage exposes pride's fundamental error: trusting in anything besides God. Edom's rock fortresses became idols promising security. Proverbs 16:18 warns: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Isaiah 2:11-12

declares that in the Day of the LORD, human pride will be humbled and God alone exalted. Pride is the original sin—Satan's "I will ascend" (Isaiah 14:13-14) and humanity's grasping for equality with God (Genesis 3:5).

The gospel addresses pride fundamentally. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). Christ's incarnation demonstrates the opposite of pride—self-emptying humility (Philippians 2:5-8). God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5). Believers must guard against every form of pride—intellectual, moral, spiritual, material—recognizing that everything we have is a gift and that security rests in God alone, not circumstances, achievements, or possessions.

Historical Context

Edom occupied the mountainous region stretching from the Dead Sea southward to the Gulf of Aqaba. The capital city Sela (meaning "rock") was later known as Petra, one of the ancient world's most spectacular cities—entire buildings, temples, and tombs carved directly into cliff faces. Access was through the Siq, a narrow gorge barely wide enough for two people, making invasion nearly impossible by conventional means.

This geography fostered pride. Edom's location astride major trade routes between Arabia, Egypt, and Mesopotamia brought wealth. Their fortifications provided security. Archaeological evidence shows sophisticated water systems, impressive architecture, and economic prosperity. Yet God's word through Obadiah declared that none of this would save them from judgment for their sin.

History vindicated the prophecy. Despite their seemingly impregnable position, Edom was conquered by the Nabatean Arabs (6th-5th centuries BC), who displaced them from their territory. Later, the Edomites migrated to southern Judea (Idumea), were forcibly converted to Judaism during the Maccabean period, and finally disappeared from history after Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. The magnificent rock-carved city of Petra stands today as a silent witness to the truth that human pride and earthly security are ultimately futile apart from God.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What false sources of security (wealth, status, intelligence, achievements, nationality) might you be trusting more than God?
2. How does pride deceive you into believing you are more self-sufficient, secure, or righteous than you actually are?
3. In what specific areas of life do you ask "Who shall bring me down?"— believing yourself immune to consequences or beyond divine judgment?
4. How does Jesus Christ's humility and self-emptying (Philippians 2:5-8) contrast with natural human pride, and what does following Him require of you?
5. What practices of humility, gratitude, and dependence on God would expose and uproot pride in your heart?

Interlinear Text

בְּחִגְגִּי שְׁבַתׁ וְ בְּלֵבְן יְהוָה בְּשִׁיאָן
The pride in his heart hath deceived thee thou that dwellest in the clefts
H2087 H3820 H5377 H7931 H2288

מֵעַל בְּלֵבְן אֶמְרָן שְׁבַתׁ וְ אֶמְרָן בְּלֵבְן
of the rock is high thee thou that dwellest that saith in his heart H4310
H5553 H4791 H7931 H559 H3820

אָרֶץ יָרַדְתִּי
Who shall bring me down to the ground
H3381 H776

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 49:16 (Parallel theme): Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.

Proverbs 29:23 (Parallel theme): A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Isaiah 16:6 (Parallel theme): We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud: even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so.

2 Kings 14:7 (Parallel theme): He slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.

Malachi 1:4 (Parallel theme): Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.
