

Not One of These Shall Fail

Isaiah

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Bible Text: Isaiah 34:1-17

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The text for the sermon today is Isaiah 34 beginning in verse 1.

1 Come near, you nations, to hear; And heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, The world and all things that come forth from it. 2 For the indignation of the LORD is against all nations, And His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. 3 Also their slain shall be thrown out; Their stench shall rise from their corpses, And the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4 All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as fruit falling from a fig tree. 5 For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; Indeed it shall come down on Edom, And on the people of My curse, for judgment. 6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, It is made overflowing with fatness, With the blood of lambs and goats, With the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom. 7 The wild oxen shall come down with them, And the young bulls with the mighty bulls; Their land shall be soaked with blood, And their dust saturated with fatness." 8 For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion. 9 Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch. 10 It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever. 11 But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it, Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. And He shall stretch out over it The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness. 12 They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, But none shall be there, and all its princes shall be nothing. 13 And thorns shall come up in its palaces, Nettles and brambles in its fortresses; It shall be a habitation of jackals, A courtyard for ostriches. 14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals, And the wild goat shall bleat to its companion; Also the night creature shall rest there, And find for herself a place of rest. 15 There the arrow snake shall make her nest and lay eggs And hatch, and gather them under her shadow; There

also shall the hawks be gathered, Every one with her mate. 16 Search from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these shall fail; Not one shall lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them. 17 He has cast the lot for them, And His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess it forever; From generation to generation they shall dwell in it."

Let us pray.

Father, you have gathered at us here together to instruct us, to teach us, to convict us, to rebuke us, to encourage us, to call us out. Father, we are thankful for your word. Your word is life. Father, I pray that your Holy Spirit would descend mightily on this congregation, Lord, that it would open the hearts of all of us here that we would heed, that we would include ourselves in the audience of this warning, that we would heed, that we would perk up, that we would hear, Lord, that you would give us the ability to see ourselves undone, Lord, that we would make much of Christ. Father, I pray that you would use Scott to rightly divide this word or to give us a greater vision of you that we would see you high and lifted up. Father, I pray that you would call unto yourself those who are hiding, as it were, from you. The utter foolishness of that, Father, I pray that you would reveal it to them that they would know you and be known by you today. Use your word, Lord, to glorify yourself and also to call sinners to repentance. In Jesus' name.

Before us is a remarkable chapter of Scripture full of swords and hawks and snakes, brimstone and an ear to hear and a book, a book to read, and the imagery here is so amazing following it is a real joy. To see the way that God has designed to declare his glory, the way that he has designed to explain the ways that everything is and everything that will happen and so it's a beautiful chapter but it's a chapter that really breathes the faithfulness of God. From beginning to end it's the faithfulness of God. That God will accomplish everything he has said and all of it is summed up in the very last words of the chapter, "not one of these shall fail." I think that's the theme of this entire testimony here, that God is faithful, that he is true and here he is demonstrating the ugliness of sin. He uglifies what ought to be a uglified and he beautifies what ought to be beautified.

We have just in the previous chapter engaged the beauty of the Lord and the beauty of the Lord is demonstrated in many different ways, in fact, when Isaiah appeals to the beauty of the Lord, he also says that, "Your heart will meditate on terror." That's another aspect of the beauty of the Lord. Some people might think that the terror, the judgment and the wrath of God is not beautiful but it is and as you meditate on the terror of God, you're also meditating on the beauty of God and so we have both of those here. Here evil is uglified in a very distinctive way and at the same time, this chapter when you read it slowly and carefully, you find that there are so many doctrines in this chapter. There is the doctrine of the love of God. You see the love and the patience of God who calls you to come near and hear. Yeah, he's calling to sinners to come near in hear. He does that to sinners who have gone as far as you can imagine, even the ones he is speaking about here.

There is the righteousness of God and how human beings are every one of them subjected to the righteousness of God and the righteousness of God either incinerates you as the result of your lack of repentance or it heals you because you turn to him. You are either protected from the wrath of God through a substitutionary sacrifice, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, or you become the sacrifice and you are slaughtered and you are burned like with brimstone and fire from every generation on. Sin always requires a sacrifice and so the beauty of the Lord in the substitutionary atonement is in this passage.

Another doctrine is the authority of Scripture, that not one thing that he said will fall to the ground. Everything will be fulfilled. That's the doctrine of Scripture, the inerrancy, if you want to call it the infallibility or the sufficiency of Scripture, it's all there right here in this passage.

There is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Mankind either trusts in Christ as his substitute or he is sacrificed. Everything ends in sacrifice, by the way.

There is the doctrine of election. Election runs all through this. Esau is the primary example in the passage and it brings us to the doctrine of election, "Jacob I have loved and Esau I hated."

There is eschatology here. When is this going to happen? Verse 8, "For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion."

This brings us to the whole doctrine of the final judgment. It pictures Matthew 25 and the sheep and the goats. There is only one single final judgment. There is only one day of the Lord in its finality, however, there are many days of the Lord that are designed to tell us what the final day of the Lord will be about and that's what we find here in this passage.

So whether it's election or eschatology or whether it's substitutionary atonement or the righteousness of God or the authority of Scripture, it's all right here in this passage so it's such a beautiful text for us to be in here. It breathes the faithfulness of God. The context here I think we should remind ourselves of it. In chapters 34 and 35, we have a unit and I think it's a conclusion to chapters 28 through 33. Chapters 28 through 33 were the woes. There were 6 woes that were declared and the last woe was declared against the nations but the rest of them were declared against Judah itself. But chapters 20 through 33 spoke generally of God's wrath against an apostate people and now in 34 and 35, I think it is the conclusion of that section and so chapter 34 focuses on the certainty of the desolation that is coming on those who think like and live like and act like Esau. Judgment comes upon those who deserve it, but then in chapter 35, the very next chapter, we see how salvation comes to those who do not deserve it and so these form a unit. Many preachers preach on chapter 34 and 35 together as a unit. We'll break them in 2 here, 35 next week on the salvation of God and Isaiah seems to think this way as he delivers his prophecy where you have a long section and then a summary and that summary may become a bridge to the next and I think also this section is a bridge to chapter 40 and on. It's kind of summarizing how God glorifies himself in salvation and also in judgment but we saw a

similar thing in chapters 24 through 27 which are summaries of the previous chapters of the judgments against the nations. Remember, God judges the nations and it describes it in chapters 13 through 23 and then in chapter 24 through 27, it is kind of a conclusion of it.

So we see here that the plan of God for Edom. Edom is front and center in chapter 34 and the message here is this: that if you have some way of your life that is like Esau, if you are like Esau, then you will suffer the fate that is here. That if you love the things of this world and you're all about advancing yourself in this world and you're trading your inheritance for a mess of pottage as Esau did, then you should expect what you find here in the main body of this passage in Scripture which is verses 5 through 15; the majority of the chapter focuses on Edom. So if you like the taste of the world, if the mess of pottage is your preference over the holiness and the beauty of the Lord, then the consequences of it aren't hard to predict at all. They are described right here. Esau is, I think, a type of the flesh, of an affection for the things of the flesh. So in this is a warning according to the faithfulness of God to show us any of these things that might be there.

So what you have here is kind of a history tour in a way from the days of Edom, from the beginning of the days of Edom to the end of the world is all pictured here and along the way I think you have Sennacherib and Babylon and all kinds of other events all the way up to the final judgment. I think also it's worthy to point out that you see a contrast here. In the previous section, you saw a peaceful home. You saw a place of beauty and a place of glory and grace. It was the beauty of the Lord that guided everything in that home and in this chapter here, you see a city that's abandoned. You go from a peaceful home to a city that is in complete disarray, that has been deconstructed. You might think about your own home that way. Think of your home if everything was stripped out of it and it was bare and there were despicable animals that had rule and reign over it and you would be an unwelcome visitor in your own home. This is kind of the picture that you find here. The heart of it, I think, is that God is going to accomplish everything that he has said. That not one of these shall fail.

Not one of his words will fail so when we read these descriptions of the final judgment, recognize that not one single word of this will fail and you will see it. If you're not a Christian, you will see it. If you are a Christian, you will see the very same thing and so it is a disclosure. You know, it's always a loving thing to disclose things that are profitable for one's life and here God is disclosing things. He is a loving God and he describes these things in such remarkable detail. You know, if you go back through the Bible and read the words and look at the images that God uses to describe really everything, but let's just take hell. He has used so many ways. He wants to show you from a thousand different standpoints what it's like. He doesn't want you to go into hell. He wants to save you and as a result, he's going to give you one image, one word after another. Hundreds, thousands of them so that you would see what it was really like in order to bring you to your senses; to pull you back from the brink; to help you to see the error of any vestige of worldliness that exists in your soul.

So let's go to verse 1 here. First of all, there is a call to come near and hear. Verse 1, "Come near, you nations." I love those words, "Come near, to hear; And heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, The world and all things that come forth from it." So here he calls them to do 3 things. First, he calls them to come near. God is in the business of calling sinners to come near and he does this in many different ways. You can find it all throughout the Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ said it this way, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." There is no rest for the wicked but there is rest in Jesus Christ and he calls the wicked to come. You know, at the very end of the Bible in Revelation, you read these words, "The Spirit and the bride say come." They say come and the Lord Jesus Christ himself says, "Come and eat my bread and drink my wine." This is the call of the Gospel to come near. The second thing he calls them to do is to hear and that has to do with listen. Listen to these words. Then the third thing he calls them to do is to heed. So to come near, to hear and to heed. To heed is to pay attention. To not let it go in one ear and out the other but to ponder these things. Considering them carefully and looking at them distinctively. This is what sinners must do if they hope to escape the wrath of God and to find his healing hand. To be healed by the beauty of the Lord, they must come near, they must hear and they must heed. This is the call of the love of God. Whenever you find the judgment of God, you're always talking about the love of God because God calls sinners to come and to hear and to heed the things that he has to say.

You also, I think, in this very first verse, you find another example of the love of God and that is the patience of God. God does not leave Judah to herself to just fall headlong into damnation. He calls her to come. He warns her. He gives her time. You know, what would it have been like for you if God didn't take time to call and he called you in so many ways? And we are so thickheaded as human beings. We're slow and we often have to hear it many times until finally it comes and we see who we really are and we finally believe that not one word of his will fall to the ground, that all of it is true. You know, God here speaks this to this nation and it wouldn't be for over 2000 years, 2700 years, not even 2700 years later will God bring final judgment. He hasn't brought it yet, has he? 2700 years later and God is still calling. God is still saying, "Come near, hear, heed. Heed the words." The patience of God are all over this passage of Scripture. It is terrifying. We are beholding the terror of the Lord but you can't behold the terror of the Lord without seeing how patient he is with mankind and here now, even up to this day, God has not brought all of these things to pass although he has brought many types of it, many ways of speaking of it.

We also find in verse one who this is directed to and I'll just shorten it: it's directed to everybody. The nations, the people, the earth and all that is in it and all that comes forth from it: the animals, the plants, everything. No one is left out. Nothing is left unmentioned here. It identifies this great danger, it's the judgment of God. You know, the greatest danger is not global warming. The greatest danger is not economic collapse, it's not Islam, it's not gay marriage, it's not any contemporary threat. The greatest threat to mankind is God. Carnal people have a tendency to shift their attention to temporal problems. All they can think about are the temporal problems like global warming or whatever is happening at this moment in history and Islam or whatever other threat there

might be. But we often medicate ourselves by obsessing about the temporal threats but there is actually a very real and perpetual threat and that is God himself. Obsessing about your temporal social, economic and political problems are one thing, but it would be very unwise to do that without counting on the greatest problem and that is God and his wrath. So there is a tendency to shift our thinking and our conversation to all these external threats and it eases our pain so that we don't have to think about God and the threat that there is against the world from him and it's a lot easier to be angry about Obama than it is to be angry about the Obama that is in me. We often think about life so wrongly in that sense, but here in verse 1, it's kind of a wake-up call to say, "Hear and heed and come near." And we should do that because not one of these things shall fail.

Then we get to verses 2 through 4. This is another segment here that Isaiah is using for his argument to describe the judgment of God and he's speaking of God's indignation and fury against the nations. First of all, we find in verse 2 that this indignation leads to utter destruction against all the nations and this has already, I think, been proven quite well enough in world history up to now. We should note that this is true now. The nations of the earth fall and this is the way it is.

Now, it's interesting that there is a change of tense here in verse 2 to the past tense as if it had already happened and the reason Isaiah does this is he is giving another testimony of the certainty of it. He is saying it but it's as if it has already happened and in many ways it will happen in many ways all throughout history, but he's speaking of something that hasn't happened as if it has happened because it's going to happen. That's why he speaks that way and Isaiah does this as we have seen many times. He uses the past tense to speak of things that have already happened and he uses the future tense in the same way. He will close the chapter with how he is going to bring it to pass and so he is really speaking of the sovereignty of God and the judgment over all the nations. Where is Rome? Where is Greece? Where is Hitler? Where is Stalin? Where are they? Well, they have found themselves being described in this verse here.

It says in verse 2 that they will be utterly destroyed. That word "utterly" is very important. It's the word "charam" and it means "to devote to destruction" where all people and property are destroyed, even the animals and sometimes the wealth of the city is implied. In Joshua 6, we find this word, Joshua 6:21, "And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city," of Jericho, "both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword." We see the same word in 1 Samuel 15 where Samuel commanded Saul to destroy Amalek for what they did to Israel. The word "utterly" means "to exterminate; to mutilate; to ban; to destroy." It's an important word. It's one we should pause upon.

We should meditate on terror. The word bears witness to God's irreconcilable hostility to evil. He is antagonistic eternally against all unrighteousness and ungodliness in men and God is angry, he says, with the wicked every day. I am quoting the Scriptures, and he will completely neutralize it. He will totally wipe it out. It will be a scorched earth. God is not tolerant toward evil. God is tolerant toward everything except evil and he uses this word "utterly" to express his absolute intolerance against evil which should just warn us about

the courting of any kind of worldliness in our lives. The dangers that there are in it. Yes, these things will be burned with fire. They will be slaughtered one way or another and so we always have to ask, "Do I have a high toleration of evil or a low toleration of evil? Do I tolerate it in what I hear? What I see? What I do? What I think? Do I tolerate it in my life?"

But Isaiah is giving a graphic detail here about what charam looks like and let's go to verse 3 because there are several things here that are explaining what this charam is all about. The first is that the slain are thrown out in verse 3, "Also their slain shall be thrown out; Their stench shall rise from their corpses, And the mountains shall be melted with their blood." This has to do with casting something out; casting out in terms of its utter annihilation; to be thrown out. The same terminology was used of Joseph when he was thrown into the pit and, by the way, God does like to throw things in a direction and he uses this same word for sin in Micah 7 where he says that he "casts your sin into the depths of the sea." This is what God does with sin. For the repentant sinner, he separates your sin from you to the bottom of the ocean. At the same time, though, he is throwing out.

Secondly, you see their dead bodies. "Their stench shall rise from their corpses." Now, the Assyrian army is either going to die soon or already has as Isaiah is writing this, but the mysterious death on the battlefield of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the night, they are figurative. Their dead bodies are figurative of the billions and billions of dead bodies that there will be at the end of the age when God slays the wicked.

Then you find the mountains melting, thirdly, "And the mountains shall be melted with their blood." I want to suggest that this is prophetic hyperbole. It's figurative language that is trying to grip the heart to give it analogies to see how terrible it is. Here you have, if you can just picture for a moment a mountainside and all of a sudden rivers of blood start washing down it and it eventually washes the mountain away. That is the graphic image of God's judgment and, remember, all of these things will be fulfilled. You will think this way when you see it. When you meditate on terror, this is the imagery that is included.

Then the fourth thing is the host of heaven is dissolved in verse 4, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved." Here it's difficult to know exactly what he's speaking about here about the host of heaven because the term "host of heaven" is used different ways. In many places it's used of the stars, the constellations, the things in the heavens. In other places, it's directly related to idolatry; in many places, it's directed to idolatry. It's a picture of this host of heaven being torn down, being dissolved, even as being unraveled. It is being deconstructed. You know, John Newton actually incorporated the idea that's in this verse in the song Amazing Grace. Actually, I'm not sure if John Newton wrote this verse. There are a number of verses in Amazing Grace that John Newton didn't write so this one might not be him but this one is included in the song. "The earth shall soon dissolve like snow." That's how he expressed it or someone expressed it. It will dissolve like snow. "The sun forbear to shine, But God who called me here below, Will be forever mine." Will be forever mine.

The first scriptural use of "host in heaven" is found in Deuteronomy 4:19 where Moses is talking about when you "lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars and the host of heaven and be drawn away to worship them and serve them." This has to do with loving the things of the world; being so in love with creation, the beauty of it, the opportunities of it, the experiences, the fun of it. You know, seeing it and loving it and having your whole life just wrapped around the pleasures and the accomplishments of this world, but there is no thought of the true God of heaven. The beauty of the Lord is not in your mind, it is the beauty of the world and it is a beautiful world, isn't it? There are so many remarkable things you can do. Have you ever thought, I just wish I had 10 lives? I could do 10 different things that I would love to do. I felt like that many times but there is only one heaven and that's the most important thing. But I think he's speaking of idolatry here, that he is going to dissolve idolatry and idolaters and there are many places in Scripture that we could go here but he is, I believe, speaking of those who have lifted up their eyes to the world and have loved it so much that they have missed the kingdom of heaven.

Then the fifth is the heavens are rolled up. Perhaps this is hyperbolic language. Perhaps it's not. "And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as fruit falling from a fig tree." We sang about this this morning, "It is well with my soul, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll." This is a picture of divine judgment. You know, the writer of that song really understood the interplay of judgment and mercy, the grace of God and the wrath of God, how they really were all interconnected. It's difficult to think about one without thinking about the others. Well, Isaiah is the same way. That's why he's always going back and forth from salvation to judgment. They are so intertwined, inextricably connected in the word of God.

This is most likely related to the language in Revelation 6 that we read earlier and Matthew 24 and Matthew 25 where there are signs in the heavens and we know that in Matthew 24, at least I believe, he's referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. because of Matthew 24:35 which says that this will take place in this generation. The people hearing it will find it takes place in their generation. There are many different interpretations of this but I take it as prophetic hyperbole, a statement that is so extreme that it's designed to grip your soul so that you wouldn't forget it; to have it in your mind, to show you how absolutely vivid it is.

2 Peter 3:7, I think, speaks of the final end of it where the final judgment does take place. 2 Peter 3:7, "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy

conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" I think that Peter is speaking directly about this matter. He's using so many of the same words that Isaiah has used and I think that Peter is saying, "This final judgment is that of which the prophet Isaiah was speaking about," and so he uses the same terminology there. Eschatology is a difficult matter and we should all just recognize we have much to learn about it. I know that I do.

But what we find here is that God is attacking every resistance to his will. His wrath is a visible detestation of unrighteousness and it should remind us to be a holy people like Peter reminds us in 2 Peter, that the wrath of God should spur us on to holiness; to set aside every wicked thing in our lives; to be uncompromising; to put the ban upon it; to utterly remove it from your life because it will be utterly removed and it will be dealt with, but the good news is that the wrath of God can be diverted and there is nothing that man can do to divert the wrath of God. Only a person who has faith in Jesus Christ will find the wrath of God averted. That's where the deliverance from this wrath comes and Jesus Christ absorbs the wrath of God that you deserve because you turned to him. Because you did hear. You did draw near and you did heed. There is always hope for the sinner and you think of the patience of God that continues on for sinners. Maybe there is somebody here today and they are hearing about the judgment of God again. Maybe it's like the 97th time you have heard about the judgment of God from this pulpit, like you have grown up in this church, you have been hearing this since you were 8 years old and you just heard it again. The love and the mercy of God has fallen upon your ears again. He has spoken to you and he has said, "Come to me. Hear. Heed because not one of these things will fail." What a blessing God is to speak.

Then the discussion in verse 5 turns to Edom. Now, this is really the center of the example that Isaiah is using. Isaiah uses many nations, many examples to explain the love and the mercy and the wrath of God and he uses Edom in verses 5 through 15. Edom is the object of God's wrath in this context. Do you see that? I mean, it's very clear. He's speaking about a real people who really lived and there is a real judgment coming upon those real people who really lived. He is using an historical example in order to bear witness to another historical example that will take place at the end of the age and Edom is both the real enemy that will be destroyed in space and time and history, and this people is also figurative of those who have rejected God for the pleasures of this world; representing the reprobates who hate God, who love pleasure, who have an idolatrous affection for the silliest of things. How about a mess of pottage? Who would sell his soul for some entertainment for a moment. It's remarkable. He loves the things of this world and he loses true treasure as a result, trading his pleasures for an inheritance. He loved the good life. He wanted the approval of his father. We don't know exactly why he wanted the approval of his father, was it just to get his father's goods or he just wanted to honor his father, but it didn't come from a holy impulse at all. But the goods of this world and the momentary pleasures and excitements of this world that he got from a really good bowl of stew were enough for him to get on for another day and he represents people.

Now, there are 7 passages of Scripture that shed light on Edom. I'm going to give you 7 of them. I have numbers here if you want to write them down. They are worthy of study. The first is Numbers 20:14 through 22. Now, I think we should just understand what this sin of Edom is all about. Why does the wrath of God fall? Edom gives us a sense of it. We're being instructed about what pleases and displeases God.

In Numbers 20:14 through 22, we find a story of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt and they are on their way to the Promised Land and they come to Edom and the Edomites resist them. The Edomites stand in their way. They won't help them and they actually bring sort of an army up in order to give them a message that they don't have anything good to do with them at all. The people of God came in peace but they were met with hostility and this hostility is really the primary characteristic of Edom. They hated the people of God. This is why Saul had to go to war against Edom and David and Solomon. The great kings of Israel had to deal with Edom in battle and this was true of God. God was doing battle with Edom because they didn't like the church of Jesus Christ.

The second passage is Psalm 137:1 through 7 and here the scene shifts to the Babylonian captivity after it, not after it but just before it, and they are cheering on the Babylonians in their hostility in 586 BC. Verse 7 in Psalm 137 says, "Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, 'Raze it, raze it, To its very foundation!'" In other words, when Nebuchadnezzar came in to destroy Jerusalem, Edom was right there clapping, saying, "Raze it! Tear the city down!" They hated the people of God so much they loved to see the beauty of the Lord destroyed.

The third passage of Scripture is Obadiah 1. I'd like you to open your Bibles to Obadiah 1. I'm going to bounce through it because there are some really significant insights in Edom. The prophet Obadiah lived during the days of Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel and the prophets of Baal and, you know, you would have wanted to know Obadiah. He was a courageous man. He was not afraid to be identified with the people of God. In fact, one time he hid 400 prophets of God in a cave because Jezebel was going around the country killing the prophets of God and he brought, think about this for a minute, he brought 400 prophets into a cave and he fed them and he kept them safe from the sword of Jezebel. What a guy. You would have loved to of known him.

But Obadiah wrote one chapter, or at least we call it one chapter, and so when you go to Obadiah 1, you're going to the only chapter in Obadiah. The first part of Obadiah speaks of what God is going to do to Edom like for example in verse 2, God will reduce him, make him small, and God will make him despised in verse 2. Then in verse 3 we learn why: he was deceived by pride. Verse 3, "The pride of your heart has deceived you." Pride always deceives us and that's what happened to Edom. Then in verses 6 and 7, God says he's going to raise up armies. He is going to raise up a confederacy that want their wealth, their friends, of course, that they had commerce with. They are going to rise up and a confederacy is going to force them to the border. Then in verse 8, their wise men will be destroyed. In verse 9, their mighty men will be dismayed and then slaughtered. Then we learn why. Why, why, why, why did this happen? Verse 12, "But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother In the day of his captivity; Nor should you have

rejoiced over the children of Judah In the day of their destruction." In other words, they rejoiced in the calamities of the people of God. They are brothers. They rejoiced in the calamity of their brothers. Then they spoke proudly of their distress. They were glad for the distress of their brother. Have you ever had a brother that was in distress and you were glad for it? This is exactly what is happening. "Nor should you have spoken proudly In the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people In the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction In the day of their calamity." Then we find that they actually took advantage of their calamity, "Nor laid hands on their substance In the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads To cut off those among them who escaped; Nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained In the day of distress." So they rejoiced at their brothers' calamity. Let that sink in. This is something that God hates. This is something that the judgment of God comes upon the sons of men for.

Here is a fourth text, Amos 1. Amos chapter 1, actually itemizes the sins of Edom and I'll tell you, they boil down to hating his brother and pursuing his brother with the sword and casting off all pity. His anger would not end. In other words, he was unforgiving. He just wouldn't let it go. Have you ever...is there a brother that you just can't let it go? You just can't let him off the hook? Maybe you take him off the hook one day and you put him back on there a few days later and you hold him up there and you talk to him and you just can't let him off the hook. You just can't love your brother. It's a picture, Edom is, how anger feeds and it continues. I don't know, is there a Christian brother across town that you can't seem to love? You rise up in your soul against him and you put him back on the hook and you dangle him? You give him lectures? You're driving in the car and nobody can see it but you're giving him a lecture. You're hanging him up on that hook. You know, one of the definitions of forgiveness in Scripture is you take somebody off the hook. You let them off the hook. That's what forgiveness does and then it doesn't put them back up on the hook, and if you do put him back up on the hook, you repent again and you take him back off the hook again. But this was the great sin of Edom. It's a danger in every family where one brother cannot pity another. That family member is in danger if you cannot pity. That was what happened with Edom, they could not pity.

Fifth, here's a fifth text, Joel 3:19. Edom is destroyed for shedding innocent blood and then sixth in Isaiah 63:1, it shows the success and the attention that Edom had toward outward appearances. They come from the capital city of Edom which is Bozrah, they are confident, they are strong and God is saying, "Why are you carrying yourself this way?" And Edom acknowledges that he has autonomy and he has shed innocent blood and his robes are stained with blood and he is quite happy about it. It's that pride; it's that self-sufficiency, self-confidence. These are the sins of Edom. They are pointed out.

Seventh, Malachi 1:2 through 4. "'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.'" This is about election. This is about the love of God, that God in his love, he chooses those who would love him. And Paul picks this up in Romans 9:10 through 13 where he says, again, he quotes this passage of Scripture and he says that, "You are saved not by your works but you are saved by the grace of

God. You are saved by the electing grace of God. It salvation by grace and by grace alone and that God has compassion on those he has compassion on and it's by grace." If you ever had one flutter, twitter, one little flicker of love for God, it came from God. Rejoice even sitting here today. If you desire to love the Lord, it came from God because God is the one who chooses.

Then there is a continued explanation of this judgment that is coming against Edom and he uses different words. The first is the sword in verse 5. "For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; Indeed it shall come down on Edom, And on the people of My curse, for judgment." There is a sword. This is a person-to-person weapon. It's like a dagger. This is the direct action of God against individuals with his sword. This is the sword of the Lord and it is a mighty sword. You read about it in Judges 7, the sword of the Lord in Gideon. When you have the sword of the Lord, you don't even need a metal sword because it's a strong sword. The song of Moses speaks of the sword written in the last couple of days of Moses's life. He says, "For I raise My hand to heaven, And say, 'As I live forever, If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword shall devour flesh, With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the heads of the leaders of the enemy. Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.'" Even Moses can't talk about the judgment of God without the grace of God. He talks about the sword and he talks about the atonement.

The sword of the Lord and then there is the sacrifice in verses 6 and 7. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood and then you get all this language of sacrifice. "Overflowing with fatness, With the blood of lambs and goats, With the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah," that's the capital of Edom, "And a great slaughter in the land of Edom. The wild oxen shall come down with them, And the young bulls with the mighty bulls; Their land shall be soaked with blood, And their dust saturated with fatness." So not only do you have a sword, you have sacrifice. This is the language of the sacrificial system: the bulls and the goats and the lambs and the rams and the fat and all these things.

This is all sacrificial language and this is a witness to substitutionary atonement, that there will be a sacrifice that will be made and either a substitute is sacrificed for sin or you are sacrificed for sin. The sinner, the unrepentant sinner, is either killed or the Lamb of God is killed. That's the whole matter of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and here it's people that are sacrificed. The animals are just figures for the people and Isaiah is saying that there is a sacrifice. There is an atonement for people who repent but there is no atonement for those who do not repent. They trusted in themselves. They have no substitute to die in their places. They have no one to stand for them in their greatest hour of calamity when they stand before God. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ said, "He who believes the Son has life." He who believes the Son has life.

Fatness is mentioned 3 times in here. Why fatness? Possibly, possibly it's an allusion to Leviticus 3 where we read, "all the fat is the Lord's." It could be that they were being fattened for sacrifice as the way that sacrificial animals were fattened for the sacrifice. But God is taking what is his own and those who have no sacrifice for their sins are sacrificed on the final day, and what Isaiah is trying to say is that he is going to accomplish everything he said, that not one of these things shall fail. Not one of them. When you meditate on terror, this is what you'll see.

Then there is the vengeance in verses 8 through 10. Verse 8 declares the purpose of the judgment against Edom and it is for vengeance and he is going to accomplish this. Not one of these things will fail. You see, the cataclysmic nature of this judgment in verse 9, "streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch." This is reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah recorded in Genesis 19:23 through 28. It's speaking of what is coming. This judgment, this fire and brimstone. Jeremiah 49:17 through 26 also compares the destruction of Edom to Sodom and Gomorrah so when God talks about Edom, he's also talking about Sodom and Gomorrah and he's also talking about the fire and brimstone of hell. It's figurative across the whole stream of redemptive history and how God has disclosed himself all throughout history for his intentions.

It's unquenchable fire in verse 10. "It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever." This is the endlessness of the fire and not one of these things shall fail.

Then you also see the desolation in verses 11 through 15. Not only is there sacrifice and vengeance but there is also desolation. You notice that there is a picture of cities and animals, that's what you find here. These despised animals possessing what used to be places where human beings were. Verse 11, "And the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it, Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. And He shall stretch out over it." It's a picture of ruins. Ruins are symbolic of fallen human efforts that are judged by God and the animals listed here are the kind of animals that are not welcome. They are trouble when they are in your area. You don't want them in your house, but now they live in your house. Now they possess your palace. Here, God is just trying to show you what this is like. He's trying to bring you back from the brink. He's trying to show you what is ahead. Not one of these things will fail.

There is the pelican and these animals, it's difficult to know exactly what these animals are by the Hebrew words there. They serve no real positive purpose as far as mankind is concerned or understands. You find this deconstructionist spoken of. "The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness." This has to do with taking things from the garden of Eden to the desert. That's what he's speaking of. He uses the word that's used in Genesis of formless and void. The world was formless and void, tohu and bohu, nothing, emptiness, confusion. God is deconstructing creation. He'll turn paradise into chaos. He's going to take the paradise that is the world of the ungodly and he's going to turn it into chaos. You know, God does give many blessings to the wicked who hate him but they

need to know that deconstruction is on the way; that everything that they have loved and participated in will be torn down. Not one of these things shall fail.

Verse 12, the nobles are not there either. The leaders have disappeared and in verse 13, you have these overgrown useless palaces. The nettles and the brambles are there. It's the habitation of jackals, a courtyard of ostriches. Once there were parties and gatherings and pomp and power and now the palaces are empty of people and they are full of foul animals and it's overgrown. The thorns and the thistles will take over. Not one of these things will fail.

The wild beasts are there in verse 14. The wild beasts of the desert and the jackals, "And the wild goat shall bleat to its companion; Also the night creature shall rest there, And find for herself a place of rest." Interesting, this night creature, what is that? The Hebrew word "lilith" is "night monster." E. J. Young says in Assyrian and Babylonian mythology, the lilith appears as a feminine night demon like in Matthew 12:4, you know, it's a little bit like lilith is a demon that wanders through the desert places at night. The word means nocturnal. Calvin said, "We don't absolutely know what the prophet means. Is it witches or goblins or satyrs or fawns? Yet it is universally agreed on that these animals have the shape of men but they are various delusions of Satan and phantoms and hideous monsters are seen, sounds and noises are heard." That's what Calvin said about this word "lilith" and the night demons. It's a horrible place. It's a place of terror.

Then there is the arrow snake in verse 15. The KJV renders this "great owl." What is it? The RSV says it is a dark snake. It's some foul animal that you don't want in your house and if it comes into your house you're going to run and that's what happened here with Edom.

Than the hawks and their mates, there shall also be hawks gathered, every one with her mate. The Edomites will be destroyed.

Then you find the certainty of this in verses 16 and 17. "Search from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these shall fail; Not one shall lack her mate." In other words, you'll see that. You'll see the hawks. "You'll see the hawk with the mate. It's going to happen exactly like I said. Your eyes will see it so come near, hear, heed. It will happen just like this and you won't just see the hawk, you'll see its mate just like I said." Every detail of it will be fulfilled. The testimonies are exact.

There are 2 commands here: to search and to read. The chapter began with an appeal to hear and now there is an appeal to search a book, the word of God, and to read. To search, to seek it out, the word has to do with treading a place with your feet, a place where you go frequently. It indicates frequency; that you search frequently; that you are running toward God and then he says read. Read the book. Reading the word of God is always profitable because it's always true and it will always be fulfilled with exactitude. None of his words will fall to the ground. They will all come true.

In verse 17, we see that he determined it, "He has cast the lot for them, And His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line." In other with, God, the sovereign God, has determined it. God is sovereign over the casting of a lot and he is the one that divided it. He is the one that is dividing the sheep and the goats and putting Edom out of its place.

Then we read, "They shall possess it forever; From generation to generation they shall dwell in it." Then this remarkable phrase, "for my mouth has commanded it." The mouth of the Lord has spoken. This is the basis of all confidence in the word of God. It is the mouth of the Lord. What does the mouth of the Lord say? The word of God is sufficient, it is infallible, it is perfect, it is pure.

Then he says, "and his Spirit has gathered them." He uses the word for Spirit, ruach. It's the word for breath. The Spirit breathes the word and the Spirit brings it to pass. It's the power of the word of God that will bring all these things to pass. Not one of these things will fail because they are God breathed. The Spirit will accomplish it.

Let me just give you a few applications here. First of all, open your eyes to see the typology of almost everything. In Isaiah 34, there are so many created things that point to the final judgment in heaven. In verse 1, the nations and the things that come forth from the world. Everything that comes forth from the world is a parable of the judgment and the mercy of God. Verse 2, armies slaughter. Whenever you see an army, whenever there is a slaughter, think about the fulfillment of it. Verse 3, the stench, the corpses, the mountains. You know, I saw a large dead animal on my property yesterday and the stench of this corpse being eaten by worms and it reminded me that it should not just remind me about how horrible that was but how horrible it will be in that day. In verse 4, the dissolving, the leaf falling from the vine, the fruit falling from the fig tree. Every time you see that, it should remind you of final judgment. The sword, Edom, lambs, goats, fat, kidneys, rams, wild oxen, young bulls, mighty bulls. Verse 9, streams turn in to pitch, burning pitch. Verse 10, smoke. Verse 11, a pelican. Have you ever seen a pelican? Think again the next time you look at a pelican. The owl, the raven, the porcupine. The nobles, verse 12. The next time you see a noble or a prince, think about it. Think about what it is symbolic of. In verse 13, the thorns, the nettles, the brambles. I pulled out a nettle out of my yard yesterday. It was right here in this text and it is designed to show me every time I pull a nettle what that is all about and why it has been placed in the world. The palaces, the jackals, the ostriches, the wild beasts of the desert. Whenever you think there is a demon in the night, think again of something greater. The arrow snake, the hawk, the book, the reading. All these things are designed to remind us.

I think we should read this and remember the patience of God. 2700 years after this prophecy, God is still waiting and we haven't seen the final act of the separation of the sheep from the goats yet because God is so kind and God is so patient. Jonathan Edwards spoke of the wrath of God being held back for this reason. He said, "The wrath of God is like great waters that are damned to the present day. They increase more and more and rise higher and higher until an outlet is given and no longer the stream is stopped and more rapid and mighty is its course when once it breaks loose. It is true that judgment against your evil works has not been executed yet. The floods of God's vengeance have

been withheld but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing and you are every day treasuring up more wrath. The waters are continually rising and waxing more and more mighty and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back that are unwilling to be stopped and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the floodgate, it would immediately fly open and the fiery floods and the fierceness of the wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable fury and would come upon you with omnipotent power and if your strength were 10,000 times greater than it is, yea, 10,000 times greater than the strength of the stoutest sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure." Edwards is picturing the wrath of God as being held back and that's exactly what has happened. It has been 2700 years. Turn. Repent. Believe in the Gospel before the wrath of God is poured out.

It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that delivers from the wrath to come. There is a way to divert the wrath of God. God has made away in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that whoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life and this passage makes it very clear that not one of these things will fail.

Would you pray with me?

Lord, we thank you for the disclosure of things that are true. You have given us so many words and images to show us. O Lord, that you would open up our eyes to see all these things in the world, to be reminded of your lovingkindness, your call, your appeal to come, to draw near, to come and enter into your rest and to behold your beauty. Amen.