

2 Chronicles 25-26 • How to Ruin a Good King

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It's not hard to figure out what the Bible has to say on the topic of pride. If you have an old book style concordance, I don't know if anybody uses those anymore. I remember getting one about 30 some years ago. I got my first one as a gift. They were enormous. I mean, they were heavy to even carry around.

But you can look up any word, like pride, and you can find all the things that the Bible has to say, of course. Concordances have, with our digital age, gotten a little out of date. Because anybody with a smartphone or a computer can get on the computer and even just Google, Bible verses on pride. Boom! They come up just like that.

Proverbs 11:12, *"when pride comes, then comes disgrace."* Proverbs 16:18, *"Pride goes before destruction,"* You've heard that one, I'm sure, before. James 4:6, *"...he gives more grace, Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud..."* Proverbs 8:13, *"The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance..."* Proverbs 16:5, *"Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord;"* That's pretty strong.

I like what Paul says in Galatians 6:3, *"...if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."* So there's, an abundance of passages that we can look at in the Scriptures related to the issue of pride.

But we don't have to go any further than frankly reading these accounts, these chronicles, of the, many of the kings of Judah, to find out exactly how pride affects their lives. And how it rushes in to someone's life who is otherwise doing well in the Lord. And beginning to walk with God in integrity and in genuine sincerity. And it just cuts them off and brings things into their life and to their ministry, which I'm certain God never intended.

We begin here in 2 Chronicles chapter 5, dealing with the life, once again, of one of the descendants of David. This time his name is,

"1 Amaziah (And we're told he) was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was

Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2 And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, (but with this one caveat at the end of that verse) yet not with a whole heart." (ESV)

Those are very important words. He did what was right-ish. That's probably the way we would say it today. He did what was right-ish, but there were things, there were issues. And we'll hopefully try to identify some of those.

It tells us here in verse 3 that, *"...as soon as the royal power was firmly his, he killed his servants who had struck down the king his father."*

Now this is not a bad thing. Because you might remember that his father was Joash. And he was a good king during most of his life, while he was under the influence of the high priest, a man by the name of Jehoiada. And Jehoiada was speaking into the life, and the ministry, and the rulership of Joash, Amaziah's father. And as long as he was speaking into his life, the king did well.

But we're told that after Jehoiada passed away, Joash began to fall under the influence of other people. Younger princes. Those who were of the royal family but who had very different ideas. And they convinced the king to worship pagan idols, you might recall that. And the Lord obviously ... We know the Lord's not going to look kindly on that whole deal.

And eventually God raised up the son of Jehoiada, the high priest, who had been the king's mentor and influence for many years, And this young man named Zechariah even prophesied against the king in the direction he was going. And we found out just how evil the king could be when he essentially ordered that Zechariah be put to death by stoning.

And the people were appalled. And eventually they assassinated the king, the father of Amaziah. And then Amaziah himself was installed king. But once the reign of Judah was firmly in his grasp, Amaziah felt the need to bring justice into the kingdom because blood had been shed. And so he put to death those who had assassinated his father.

But we're told here in verse 4, that he did so with restraint. Look what it says there.

"But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, "Fathers shall not die because of their children, nor children die because of their fathers, but each one shall die for his own sin."

And that is a quote from Deuteronomy chapter 24. It's repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament. We're told here that Amaziah obeyed the Word of the Lord, at least in this regard. It goes on; I mean, he's doing okay up to this point.

It goes on and it tells us, "*5...Amaziah assembled the men of Judah and set them by fathers' houses (In other words, according to their lineage,) under the commanders of thousands and of hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upward, and found that there were 300,000 choice men, fit for war, able to (hand) handle spear and shield.*"

And that's all good there. We're really not bothered by anything that Amaziah has done up to this point. But verse 6 introduces this rogue element into this whole thing. By saying that, "*He hired also 100,000 mighty men of valor from Israel (and that means the northern kingdom, okay, so these are mercenaries. It says he hired basically 100,000 mercenaries, and he) paid) ...100 talents of silver.*"

Now, stop for just a moment, and let's ask ourselves the simple question. Why would the king do that? He's got 300,000 able men to go to war. And yet he's obviously facing a situation for which he feels his army is insufficient. Now remember something, his army is what is given by the Lord. This is what the Lord has given him; given him 300,000 men.

Now you and I know that you don't need 300,000 men to fight a battle. Gideon learned that. I mean, he showed up with a horde of men to fight a battle against the Midianites, and God pared him down to 300. And basically said this, if I allowed you to go into this battle with any more than 300, you would take the glory for yourself. And so we're going to, we're all, we're going to do this thing, even though the hordes of the Midianites are without number. We're going to do this with just 300 men. (Judges 7:1-7)

Well, it's that, it's easy. This is God! He can do anything He wants to do. 300,000 men, 400,000 men, 300 men, three men, it doesn't matter. As Jonathan said to his armor bearer, when they were going against the Philistines, God can save by many or by few. (1 Samuel 14:6) Right? That's a statement of faith. That's a declaration of faith. What are numbers to God? Did you hear me? What are numbers to God? And whether we're talking about many people or whether we're talking about many dollars. What are numbers to God? It doesn't matter. Okay?

But you have to know that what's going on here with the king is, that he is looking upon the provision of the Lord and he's saying, it is insufficient.

It's not enough. Now, there are obviously options that we have when we feel that what the Lord has given us is insufficient. And, we can do what Amaziah does. We can turn and try to create a situation where there is a sufficiency which we do by our own power. And that's what he's doing. Or we can turn to the Lord and we can say, "Lord, there seems here to be an insufficient means to deal with my issues, to go against the enemies, to go against the challenges and the problems that I face here in my life."

Do you know, and we had this reminder, by the way, up at the Pastors and Wives Retreat, one of the pastors brought a wonderful message on Glorifying in Our Weaknesses, based on Paul's statements in 2 Corinthians related to the thorn in his flesh, as you well know that story. (2 Corinthians 12:1-9) And how the Lord spoke to Paul after he repeatedly asked to be delivered from that thorn. And the Lord said to him, no, I'm not going to deliver you, Paul, from that thorn because it is needful that it remain. It is there for a purpose. It has a redemptive value.

First of all, I've shown you incredible visions and insights, and in order to keep your feet firmly planted on the ground, so that you might not well up with pride. (Right?) I have given you this thorn of the flesh to keep you from becoming conceited. However, I want you to know that along with this thorn comes something else, and that is the grace to deal with it. And what He said specifically to Paul was, my grace is sufficient. Okay? Why? Because My power, you see, is actually perfected in your weakness.

When you recognize the deficiency in your life, rather than trying to do what king Amaziah does here, and trying to get busy and work out some kind of a situation where you're trying to bolster this obvious insufficiency and make it better and make yourself feel better, what we ought to be doing is turning to the Lord. Right?

And saying, Lord, this is the way I see it, but I'm choosing to trust in You in the midst of this thing, because what are numbers to You? What are many enemies to You? What is the difficulty of a marriage situation for which I feel greatly insufficient, what is that to You? You are able to make me sufficient. You are able to make me sufficient for whatever I face.

Now that's the reality of the situation. The fact of the matter is, we just don't always believe it. The fact is, we often do what Amaziah does here, don't we? I mean, let's just confess it. Let's just admit it right now. When we find ourselves in a position that we deem lacking, which is what Amaziah does, 300,000

warriors, not enough. We're lacking what we need. Well, you know what? I think what we need is another 100,000 men from Israel.

Now remember, where Israel is at right now. They're in, they're steeped in paganism. I mean, there's nothing going on good in the northern kingdom of Israel. And you and I can liken it to the world, if you will. It's by... It's like you and I looking at a situation in our life for which we see an insufficient means and we turn to the world.

What's the world tell me? What's the... What are my options? Tell me what my options are. I need to get this thing under control. I need to make this thing sufficient, so that I can move forward and have victory over my enemies. Whatever they may be. And we do exactly what king Amaziah does.

Verse 7 goes on and tells us that the Lord intervened.

"...a man of God came to him (came to the king,) and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel, with all these Ephraimites." Which is another name for those in the Northern Kingdom.

Did you notice what the Lord is saying here through this prophetic man? God is not with them, so don't join with them. Don't make them part of your solution, part of your sufficiency, because God is not with them. You could say the same thing about the world. There is a worldly wisdom, there is a worldly answer, if you will, that's out there for your problems.

But here's the deal. God is not with the world. And God is not with that answer, so don't join with that answer and join your life to their life. Because you're going to make yourself liable to all kinds of really nasty consequences if you do. You will become unequally yoked with the ways of the world. When you invite the world's solutions and opportunities for deliverance and so forth.

Notice what he goes on to say. *" s But go, act, be strong for the battle. Why should you suppose that God will cast you down before the enemy? For God has power to help or to cast down."* Ah, ha ha ha! Now we're getting to the issues. Now we're getting to the reason behind the attempt to manipulate the circumstances into a place of sufficiency. It's unbelief. It's a lack of faith in God.

Notice what the prophet says. Why should you suppose that you're going down in this thing? Or that God is going to... the way he specifically says it is that, *"God will cast you down..."* But that's another way of saying for you and I, why

should you suppose that God is going to let you fail in this thing? Why is that your thought process?

Have you ever wondered why we're so negative in our anticipations of challenging and even fearful, potentially fearful, events of life? It befuddles me. I mean, in my own life, it befuddles me. And I've asked Sue many times, as we've talked about these things and prayed about them. Why do I think the way I do? Why do people so naturally default to a worst case scenario? I got a toothache and I think I got a tumor in my jaw. And I'll be dead in 30 days. Why is it that's the default thought process or any number of other things?

Somebody doesn't quite respond to the way you would have anticipated when you made a statement. Instantly you think, they hate me. They hate me. I'm probably never going to, have a friend like that ever again in my life. It's just this instant default to the worst case. Right? Why do we do that?

I think this is a really good question: why do you suppose; why do you think; why are you entertaining the thought process that this is all going to go bad? Why aren't you trusting in the Lord? That's the real question, isn't it? Why aren't you instead putting your faith in God and supposing for a better result?

King David said, day by day, I lay my request before you and wait in expectation. Right? Expectation of what? Was David waiting for the sword of Damocles to fall and chop off his head? No. He was waiting for the deliverance of the Lord. Right? That was his expectation. I expect the Lord to deliver me. I expect the Lord to see me through this situation.

Why do we suppose that it's not going to happen that way? Well, here's the answer, a lack of faith. If Jesus were speaking to us, and I believe He is obviously here through His word. But if He were here speaking directly to you about those tendencies that you and I have to look at the deepest, darkest, worst possible scenario, you know what He would say to you and I? Same thing He said to His disciples, "*O you of little faith. Why do you doubt?*" Isn't that exactly what He said to His disciples? And in situations where I'm even a little surprised He said it.

Like, for example, when Peter got out of the boat and started walking toward Jesus. And then the wind and the waves, and it says that, Peter looked at the wind and the waves and he began to sink. And Jesus reached out and grabbed him. "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" (Matthew 14:31) It's like, well, probably because I spent my whole life on a boat. And I watch what happens when people, when wind and waves impact people, and that sort of thing.

It's like, I've got this learned process going on that I've been doing all my life. Right? And the older we get, the longer we have to experientially begin to recognize a fearful situation when we see it. And go, AAAHHH! Instead of saying, Jesus, I trust You. That's so difficult. Let's just confess right here and right now. Okay. It is not natural to say, Jesus, I trust You. What's natural is to become fearful. And to run off with half-cocked, and to do really dumb things like Amaziah. I think I'm going to hire me some men to make this thing turn out better. That's natural. It is supernatural to trust the Lord.

But here's the cool part. The supernatural element is available to us by faith through the Spirit, the Word giving witness and testimony. The supernatural is within our grasp. And I have to remind myself of that every single time I face a situation for which my default thought process is, I'm going down. This is it. I might as well say my goodbyes. Right?

I have to say, no! No! See, I serve a supernatural God who has given me supernatural faith. Who can enable me to instead look at this situation by faith and say, Lord, You are my deliverance. You are the power of my life. You are my strength in time of difficulty, and I'm going to trust in You. That can be my destiny and yours too.

But we do need to admit, essentially, that we're weak. And that's the point of all of this. It's okay when you and I recognize something that we think is insufficient in our lives; even if it's our faith. Because we can cry out for more of that too!

Now, Amaziah responds to this Word of the Lord in verse 9. And his response is a little disappointing. Because we're told that, "...Amaziah said to the man of God, *"But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?"* As if it is any big deal to him. I mean, the king of Judah. Hundred talents of silver, are you joking? I mean, that's pocket change to a king. Why in the world does he care about that?

And *"The man of God just answered"* (this,) I mean I... This is obviously from the Lord, because if it was from the flesh, he'd say, you're an idiot! But from the Lord, the response is, listen, *"The Lord is able to give you much more than this."* You're counting coins to God? Is that really what you're going to do, Amaziah? In the presence of Almighty God, who owns *"the cattle on a thousand hills,"* (Psalm 50:10) You're going to quibble over a hundred pieces of silver? Seriously?!! What is that to God?

Whether it is men, or whether it is money, or whether, regardless of what it is, what is that to God? And that's the point. But Amaziah's response here sets off a little bit of a red alert, in our hearts regarding here, the things that he's concerned about. It's like, okay, I'll be obedient. God told me to take these guys and send them back home. Okay, I'll do it. But I'm not really going to like it. In fact, I'm a little bit bothered that you made me do that. I'll do it, but a little bit under protest.

Verse 10 says that *"Amaziah (out of obedience) discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim to go home again. And they became very angry with Judah and returned home in fierce anger. (Keep that in mind. We'll come back to that. These are the mercenaries.) 11 But Amaziah took courage (and that's a good thing,) and he led out his people and went to the Valley of Salt and struck down 10,000 men of Seir.*

12 The men of Judah captured another 10,000 alive and took them to the top of a rock and threw them down from the top of the rock, and they were all dashed to pieces. 13 But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, (and these are the mercenaries from Israel,) not letting them go with him to battle, raided the cities of Judah, (on their way home) from Samaria to Beth-horon, and struck down 3,000 people in them and took much spoil."

So, they killed people and looted on their way home. They were mad and they were having a little hissy fit on the way home. And actually killed people because they were so upset. These are good guys to hire, by the way. Right? I mean, they just showed their true colors.

"14 After Amaziah came from striking down the Edomites, he brought the gods of the men of Seir and set them up as his gods and worshipped them, making offerings to them."

Alright, we just took a real step lower here on the level of stupid. Because here you are and you conquer a people and then you bring home their gods and worship their gods. So. it's like their gods couldn't save them from you, and now you're going to worship those gods. That's pretty crazy and that's exactly what the Lord confronts him with in verse 15.

"Therefore the Lord was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of a people who did not deliver their own people from (their) hand?" (correction - from your hand) 16 But as he was speaking, the king said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down? (In that, make no mistake, that means

killed. Why should I have to kill you?) *So the prophet stopped, but (he) said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."*

Amaziah just took a huge step downward, didn't he? Why in the world would you worship kings that couldn't even save their own people?

"17 Then Amaziah king of Judah took counsel (He's taking counsel from...He's not taking it from the Lord and from his people, but he's taking it from somebody.) and (he) sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." And that's a tough man way of saying, let's meet and let's go to battle because you did me wrong.

Obviously the counsel that king Amaziah received was this guy's army, who you hired... And by the way, it appears they walked away with a hundred pieces of silver. Right? Because the king was concerned about losing all of that money. He didn't ask for it back. I don't know what they're complaining about. They got to have money. They got paid off for not doing anything.

And I don't know, maybe that's what some of his counselors said to him. Here you paid off these guys and what did they do to you? They looted your land on the way home. And they killed some of your people. What are you going to do about that, king Amaziah? King Amaziah sends a note to the king of Israel. And he says, "Let's face off." That's what he's essentially saying, let's you and I face off.

Verse 18 says that, *"Joash... king of Israel sent word to Amaziah king of Judah. (In the form of, kind of a little parable. He says,) "A thistle on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife,' and a wild beast of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thistle."*

I don't know why he couldn't just say no. But he had to do it in a little story form. Because you see, he's not just declining the offer to come and face off with their armies. He can't resist the opportunity to give an insult. Can you relate?

Again we're looking at something that is very common to human nature, meaning the old nature of man. And that is, that when somebody irritates me or annoys me by something they say, I can't just drop it. Right? My flesh has to just throw in a barb along with my response. Rather than just saying, no thanks, I have to say, no thanks. And by the way you have an IQ somewhere in the negatives or something equally as daunting.

By the way, you might want to write that down. It works every time. I'm just joking. There's just something in our nature that we've just got to do that. What is it? What is it?

Notice that in this little parable, he likens Amaziah to a puny thistle that gets trampled on by an animal that happens to be walking by. And the message of the parable is pretty clear. That he shouldn't mistake his earlier defeat of the Edomites, to the ability now to take on the northern kingdom of Israel and succeed. Because the king of Israel is basically likening himself to an immovable cedar of Lebanon and so forth. And the message is pretty clear.

And in fact, he outlines it in verse 19, if you look with me there. He says, "*You say, 'See, I have struck down Edom,' and your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness.*" That's pretty interesting, isn't it? When your enemy correctly identifies your problem. And when your enemy is in fact a pagan, who knows nothing and cares nothing for God. And yet correctly identifies your problem that's really humbling. Well, I guess if you won't listen to God's servants.

He says, your heart is lifted up, but he says, "*But now... stay home. Why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?*" (In other words, he's basically saying, you know that I'm going to defeat you. I know that I'm going to defeat you. Why are you even boasting like you have a chance.

But look at verse 20, very important. In fact, these first five words are key to understanding the reign of Amaziah, "*But Amaziah would not listen,*" And that's his issue. And there's this point where pride does that to us. I don't know. Pride stops up our ears. It keeps us from hearing what we otherwise ought to hear. We just don't listen.

I was sharing with some of the guys here a couple of days ago, that I was reading again. I went back to read again the book, *Fresh Faith*, by Jim Cimbala. And he's the pastor of a church in downtown Brooklyn, New York. And he was a basketball player, actually played collegiate basketball. Very, very good basketball player, by the way.

But he remembers during his upper years of high school, he loved to go out and play street ball with the guys that were out there. And he said, he says, they were good! I mean these guys were good. They were talented. But he said, You know what? Not one of them ever played for any kind of a college. And ever went anywhere beyond just playing street ball.

And he said, and I knew why, too! Because none of them could be coached. Their pride was such that nobody could tell them what to do or how to better themselves. They had incredible talent, but they couldn't learn. Their ears were literally stopped-up from somebody coming along and coaching or leading or, here's our connection, discipling. Right? Because they couldn't listen. They wouldn't listen. They refused to listen.

That's what's going on with Amaziah. That's what pride does. And don't think this can't happen to a born again Christian because it can. We can be filled with pride to the point where we stop listening.

Listen, how many notorious falls from grace have you heard about from some televangelist who is doing wonderfully with their worldwide ministry. And there was great fruit and there was great response and so on. And it just got so big and it got so popular and so successful that, the televangelist begins to believe what people are actually saying about him.

He forgets the fact that he's a sinner saved by grace. He's filled with pride at the success of what's going on in his life. And he stops listening. And he starts saying boastful things and things that, eventually lead to his downfall. It's the same thing that happened to Amaziah here. He would not listen.

It goes on here in verse 20 to say, *"...for it was of God, in order that he might give them into the hand of their enemies, (and that means basically, so that they might be spanked) because they had sought the gods of Edom."*

"So Joash king of Israel (verse 21) went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. (Israel came down into the area of Judah to engage them in battle, and we're told here that) "22...Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his home."

The whole army just literally freaked out, and the guys ran home. That's not a good situation. *"23 And Joash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, (the) son of Ahaziah at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem (his own capital) and broke down the wall of Jerusalem for 400 cubits,"* And by the way, that's a statement.

That's making a statement because you see the wall of any city is its defense. And to break down 400 cubits of that wall is essentially to say, I have exposed you because of your weakness and now you are exposed. And whatever strength that you were depending upon based upon this wall has now been obliterated.

And the enemy can just waltz in whenever it wants to because that's what I have done to you.

You can see the message. It tells us *"from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate."* The wall was just broken down. And again, all because of pride. We're told also that the king of Israel.

"²⁴ ...seized all of the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God, in the care of Obed-edom. He seized also the treasuries of the king's house, (He even went into even the king's palace) also hostages, (He took people) and (then) he returned to Samaria." Which of course was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel.

"²⁵ Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel." Amaziah did not die over this situation. In fact, he lived for another 15 years even after the king of Israel. God gave him extra time to think about just how dumb this was. And just how serious are the consequences of pride.

"Now, (verse 26) the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, from first to last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? ²⁷ From the time when he turned away from the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, (Obviously the king heard about it) and (we're told here that) he fled to Lachish."

Now, we don't know much about this conspiracy. It's not given us as far as the information in either Chronicles or Kings. But apparently, some of the people became very disenchanted with the king. They considered him more of a liability to the kingdom than anything else. And they conspired against him to assassinate him.

But the king either got word of it, or some of his men got word of it. And he ran off to the city of Lachish. And it didn't matter, they found him there. And they ended up killing him in that city. And then we're told here, in fact, that's what we're told here, at the end of verse 27. *"They sent after him to Lachish and put him to death there. ²⁸ And they brought him upon horses, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David."*

Isn't that interesting? First thing that he did upon receiving the throne is he punished the men who assassinated his father. And then he ended up the same way. And all because of pride. All because of pride. If he would have called out

to the Lord; if he would have cried out to the God of his fathers, he would have been delivered. But he didn't. He refused to and he ended up being assassinated.

It's really sad when you look at this,

"¹ And all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and (they) made him king instead of his father, Amaziah." Just a note here, that Uzziah is also known, don't get confused, if you go over to 2 Kings you're going to find him named Azariah. And it was often that the king did have variants of their names that were pronounced quite differently to you and I.

But Azariah also happened to be the name of the high priest who was serving during the reign of Uzziah. And perhaps that's one of the reasons why here he is referred to as Uzziah to keep the confusion level down. Not that it is for you and I, because most of us are pretty confused trying to keep all these guys together. But just in case you're interested, Azariah means, YAHWEH has helped, and Uzziah means, YAHWEH is my strength.

Well, okay, so Uzziah's on the throne, age 16, verse 2.

"He built Eloth and restored it to Judah, after the king slept with his fathers. (He won back some of the land that his father had lost.) ³ Uzziah was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. ⁴ And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done."

It says in verse 5 that, *"He set himself (to seek the God, or excuse me,) to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper."* Once again, you hear and you see this influence, don't you? The power of influence. We see it both negatively, we see it positively. Influence. Crazy!

Verse six. *"He went out and made war against the Philistines and broke through the wall of Gath and the wall of Jabneh and the wall of Ashdod, and he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. (And) ⁷ God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians who lived in Gurbaal and against the Meunites.*

⁸ The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong. (Now that's, sounds really good, but you and I both know what happens when people become strong and popular.) ⁹

Moreover, (verse nine) Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the Angle, and fortified them.

10 And he built towers in the wilderness and cut out many cisterns, for he had large herds, both in the Shephelah (which is to say the foothills) and in the plain, and he had farmers and vinedressers in the hills and in the fertile lands,"

Because what his real love was for the dirt. He was a man of the soil. He loved planting things. He should have been a gardener, or something like that. But he's the king.

"11 Moreover, Uzziah had an army of soldiers, fit for war, in divisions according to the numbers in the muster made by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders.

12 The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses of mighty men of valor was 2,600. 13 Under their command was an army of 307,500, who could make war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

14 And Uzziah prepared for all the army shields, spears, (and) helmets, coats of mail, bows, and stones for slinging. (Boy, what a time of war, huh? Get some rocks.) 15 In Jerusalem he made machines, (Now this is pretty interesting. Check this out.) invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows (Isn't that cool!) and (also) great stones. "

You got it, I'm assuming, like we see in Lord of the Rings, those big counterweighted sorts of things that chuck these big rocks at the enemy as they're approaching and so forth.

"And (it says,) his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, (and then check this out,) till he was strong."

Then what happens? Does anybody need to question? Look at the next verse, *"16 But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense."* Stop there for just a moment.

The rite of burning altar, burning altar, burning incense on the altar of incense, was one that was reserved for the descendants of Aaron. You might remember back in the Book of Numbers, there's a very ugly incident where a man by the name of Korah grabbed a whole bunch of people and got them all lathered up

about how Moses and Aaron were taking on too much upon themselves. And you guys are exalting yourselves and we're just like you are. We're Levites. We may not be of the line of Aaron but we're Levites.

You remember the story? (Numbers 16:1-40) There was great and grave consequences that came upon them for presuming to do what they were not ordained to do. And burning incense was something only the descendants of Aaron were ordained to do.

But, Uzziah, and this is what happens when we are, when we're king. When our accountability is really to no one, we start taking things on ourselves. And he authorized himself to go in the temple and burn incense. He didn't need anybody to tell him you can or can't do this. He's the king. Who's going to say anything against the king? You better be pretty courageous to counter the king.

Thankfully, there was a priest who was just that courageous. Verse 17, *"His name was Azariah the priest went in after him and he took eighty of his fellow priests along."* I would have too. In fact, if I could muster a hundred, all the better.

But he took eighty priests of the Lord *"who were (we're told,) men of valor,"* And that means they were men of principle and understood the Word of the Lord related to these things. And they weren't afraid to stand up to the king.

And it tells us here in verse 18 that, *"...they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. (Or, if you will, set apart.) Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God."*

Now, Uzziah is a man of pride. Remember what pride does to people, keeps them from listening. Right? *"¹⁹ Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censor in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead (right there) in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense."*

Now, you have to understand something about this. Obviously, this is a judgment from the Lord, to have leprosy break out while you're railing against these priests. Who are you to tell me that I can't do this? And pop, pop, pop! (Pastor Paul imitating leprosy popping out on his forehead.) That's bad enough. And that's a sign of the Lord's judgment.

But you have to understand that anybody with leprosy could not be in the temple. They are considered unclean with this sort of a skin issue and they are not allowed to be there, so you've got a double issue going on here.

And what the Lord is declaring, because He could have done anything to the king. But by causing this leprosy to break out on his forehead where everybody can see it, He is declaring that this is an unclean situation. That this is an unacceptable situation in the presence of the Lord.

"²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the Lord had struck him. (Now he was anxious to get out of there.) ²⁰ And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king's household, governing the people of the land."

And you know what that means; that means they had a co-regency, so Jotham took over, governing, while his father was excluded from the population because of the leprosy that he had contracted.

Again, as we've seen with other kings, no repentance, no statement of remorse, no crying out to the Lord, no healing. None at all. It's just, here's your consequences, and he deals with it. But no crying out to the Lord. How incredibly sad.

Verse 22 says,

"Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz wrote. ²³ And Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, "He is a leper." And Jotham his son reigned in his place. "

And there we have the reign of Uzziah.

That's where we're going to stop for tonight. I could go on, but I want to get into Jotham. And then the final, well, it's not the final king, but his son Ahaz, who is very instrumental in Judah. Unfortunately, in a bad way, and deal with those two next week together.