

## “Uzziah: The Discontented King”

### 2 Chronicles 26

In our series on the good kings in Chronicles we have yet to come across someone who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, all the days of their life. Actually we're beginning to see a pattern. All those whom God said did what was right in His eyes started their rule that way but most did not finish that way. And this morning's monarch fared no better, Uzziah. Uzziah is also known as Azariah. His account in 2 Kings calls him Azariah but here and in a few other places he is called Uzziah. Uzziah was most likely his throne name and the Chronicler uses it because the high priest's name was also Azariah. The Chronicler will use both the meanings of these names as subtle messages in this chapter as a reminder to the readers that God can do amazing things for you when you stay obey Him.

The first 2 verses of Ch. 26 actually close off ch. 25 and the end of Uzziah's dad Amaziah. Amaziah followed God so long as Jehoiada was high priest. He had significant influence on Amaziah but once he died Amaziah listened to godless advisors and made poor decisions. The people chose Uzziah to take his place; probably even before Amaziah died.

Like his father Amaziah in ch. 25 there are distinct 'before' and 'after' sections of his life. Vv. 1-15 is when he did what was right in God's eyes and vv.16-23 records his poor finish. Pride will be Uzziah's undoing. Pride that grew from the root of discontentment. In vv.1-15 we're going to see all kinds of things Uzziah was able to do when he followed God, but obviously he wasn't content with that. He wasn't content with where God put him, what role God gave him and he wasn't content with the amazing blessings God gave him. So then what can we do to avoid the prideful error of Uzziah that grew out of a discontented heart? As we survey the blessings and successes God allowed Uzziah to have I think the way we can reduce the opportunity for pride to raise its ugly head in our lives is by . . .

### **Being Careful to Give God Glory for all your Blessings and Successes (26:1-15)**

The apostle Paul said in Acts 17,

*<sup>24</sup>“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.<sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.<sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup>God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup>For in him we live and move and have our being.*

If in Him we live and move and have our being, God has placed us at our appointed time in history and in the geographical boundaries we live in so that we would find Him and make Him known or glorify Him. Glorify God simply means to show that our life is to be a reflection of Him. All that we have and do is a gift from God. When we get that we will be content in who we are and what God has given us to do through the gifts He's given us and the people He's chosen for us to serve with. Let's use Uzziah's blessings and successes as an illustration for how we should glorify God.

We should thank God and glorify God . . .

## ***For our upbringing (v.1, 3)***

Uzziah was born in Jerusalem as a son of a king of David. He was made king at 16! Lots of privileges and lots of responsibilities. His mother's name was Jecoliah and she was from Jerusalem. Each time someone is from Jerusalem it is intended to be a blessing. Her name meant 'The Lord is able'. Azariah [his actual name] means 'with the help of the Lord' and Uzziah, his throne name, means 'The Lord is my strength.'

So he had a godly background. He was raised to be an heir to the throne of Israel, God's people with whom He made a covenant and wanted to bless in their land. Uzziah's upbringing pointed him to God in numerous ways. He should have been thankful – as should we.

We were born in a great country. Many of you had godly parents; and even those of us whose parents weren't believers they were good people who treated us well. We in North America have blessings many people do not have in other parts of the world. We should thank God for His sovereignty in our lives for where and how we grew. Many of us probably had some kind of childhood tragedy or hurt but overall God has blessed us. Let's not take that for granted.

And let's thank God . . .

## ***For our God-influencers (vv.4-5)***

God helped Uzziah's grandfather by having the high priest Jehoiada involved significantly in his life. *"Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years of Jehoiada the priest"* (24:2). Uzziah's dad Amaziah listened to a prophet who helped influence him toward godliness for a while. And here we read that Uzziah,

*<sup>4</sup> He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. <sup>5</sup> He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.*

*"Just as his father Amaziah had done"* means Uzziah sought God and did what was right as long as Zechariah was involved in his life. Zechariah was a popular name and we don't know anything about him; this is a different Zechariah than Jehoaida's son Zechariah because grandpa Joash put him to death.

Who were (or who are) the godly influencers in your life? We talked about how important they are to our walk with God. Do we thank God for those people who pointed us Godward? Do we still have (and are we ourselves) people who point others to do what's right in the eyes of the Lord? We can't depend on them – as perhaps Joash and Uzziah had done – and fall apart when they are no longer with us. That just tells us we never followed God for ourselves; we were just riding someone else's coattails.

Yet when we are thankful to those who pointed us or keep us pointed to God and His Word, thank God – glorify Him for how He is steering us towards Himself. Somewhere in his life Uzziah forgot Zechariah and went in the wrong direction.

Much of these verses are a list of Uzziah's accomplishments. Here's another way we can hinder pride from creeping into our life so we give God the glory . . .

## **For our accomplishments (vv.2, 6-7, 9)**

*He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his ancestors.*

Elath is modern day Eilat, the southernmost point in Israel, a major port city on the northern tip of the Gulf of Aquaba which leads into the Red Sea which takes you to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. This was how Solomon traded with other nations many years before. So Uzziah was restoring Israel to its former glory!

He even defeated the Philistines just like David!

*<sup>6</sup> He went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. He then rebuilt towns near Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. <sup>7</sup> God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabs who lived in Gur Baal and against the Meunites.*

God 'azared' him – Azar=help, a play on his name!

And v.9,

*<sup>9</sup> Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them.*

These towers were look out and defense posts. They were also used to attack the enemy as we'll see next. The writer is very clear to credit God for Uzziah's accomplishments-but was Uzziah? When we don't give God the glory for our accomplishments we glorify ourselves. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Let's also be quick to glorify God even in.. .

## **Our interests and ideas (vv.10, 15)**

*<sup>10</sup> He also built towers in the wilderness and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.*

The land was a gift from God but so was Uzziah's love for the land. He put his God-given interest and enjoyment for the land into good purposes; it fed people. It gave many people jobs. It improved the look of the landscape. Those unique interests you have that others don't were intentionally given to you from God to enjoy but also to use it to make a difference in people's lives. Let's be careful we don't mock God when we roll our eyes or shake our heads at someone else's interests just because it doesn't interest us. God can use our interests for His purposes. It would pretty boring if we all had the same interests.

Uzziah also had some great God-given ideas:

*<sup>15</sup> In Jerusalem he made devices invented for use on the towers and on the corner defenses so that soldiers could shoot arrows and hurl large stones from the walls. His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.*

While we might be quick to conclude he invented the catapult, that's not true. The catapult was invented in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. And the word "machine" is a poor translation. Even the updated NIV

upgraded that translation in their revised version. Some suggest what he invented was a canopy or covering on the towers that enabled his soldiers to shoot without worrying about injury from attack. Whatever he invented it was an idea that came from God because 'From Him, and through Him and to Him are all things.

When we come up with a good idea, let's give God the glory for it. He made our brains. He made the material so our ideas can come to fruition. Perhaps Uzziah started to believe he was smart enough and strong enough and wise enough to be king of Israel. Perhaps like Nebuchadnezzar years later Uzziah would look at all he did and say 'What a great guy I am!'

But everyone needs people. So give God the glory . . .

### ***For those who help you (vv.11-14)***

Judah wouldn't have been secure as they were if they didn't have good soldiers and gifted workers to carry out Uzziah's ideas. Thank God for the people who help you do what you do so that you are not tempted to think you are smarter than anyone else. We all need each other. We're all uniquely different and gifted to complete the gaps in each other's lives so God can accomplish great things through us.

Uzziah had a well-trained army with gifted and responsible people looking after that. They were well-supplied to defend everyone. An army is there to protect everyone not just Uzziah. Take stock of your life sometime this week and make a list of as many people as possible who make your life better, safer, godlier and productive. We can't do it alone.

Unfortunately Uzziah forgets the number 1 lesson in life: 'It's not about you.' In spite of all the blessing and success God brought into his life, he wasn't content. He felt as the king he should be able to do anything he wanted. V. 15 ended with,

*<sup>15</sup> . . . His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.*

Azariah (his real name) was greatly 'azared' until he became 'uzzaq', strong or powerful which is the root of Uzziah. He got helped (by the Lord) and the Lord strengthened him but when he became 'uzzaq' strong/powerful *his pride led to his downfall.*

We need to give God glory for all His blessings and successes in our lives and

## **Be Careful to Humble Ourselves before God So We Don't Lose out on Blessings and Successes** **(26:16-23)**

He gives them to us but he can also take them away if we arrogantly think we did it by ourselves or we get to a point where we think we don't need God's people in our life to help us mature and grow.

*He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. <sup>17</sup> Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in.*

### ***Unchecked pride leads to disobedience (vv.16-17)***

To say he was “unfaithful” is a very strong condemnation. How did he get to this point? He didn’t glorify God for all his blessings and successes. Glorifying God shows you know you weren’t the one who behind the blessings and successes – God was. From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Uzziah – and people full of pride – feel as if everything comes from us and through us and to us. The more proud we are of ourselves the greater chance we have of disobedience – significant disobedience.

Uzziah comes into the holy place – disobedience. No one was allowed into the holy place other than the priests. Why? The Tabernacles and Temple were word pictures that said ‘No one gets to God without a mediator, one who will apply the blood of the sacrifice for your sins and be your mediator before God. Until Jesus became that for us, the priests illustrated that role. No access to God without a Mediator.

And why he thought he could burn incense when only the priests can is strange! Did he not remember what happened to Aaron’s two oldest sons who brought strange fire/incense before God and were killed on the spot (Lev. 10)? Did he not remember when Korah tried to rebel against Aaron and Moses and want to be a mediator too and God swallowed up his whole family alive by causing the earth to open up under his feet (Num. 16)? And didn’t he remember Israel’s first King Saul (1 Sam. 15) who lost the crown because he made sacrifices himself without waiting for the priest Samuel to come? Each one of them because of pride felt they were good enough to approach God on their own. Uzziah’s sin was essentially -

***“I don’t need anyone to come to God”***

‘I can come to God on my own because I’m better, smarter, more spiritual than others.’ Uzziah has been reading his own press clippings. He was doing what was right. He was the next Solomon. He was the next David. I don’t need a supporting cast; I don’t need other people to worship God. I don’t need a church family. I don’t need to be “told what to do”. I don’t need to pray or study the Bible with other Christians, etc, etc, etc. All the same attitude that says ‘I don’t need anyone else to come to God. What we fail to recognize of course [as Uzziah did] is our own rebellious spirit.

### ***Disobedience leads to a rebellious spirit (vv.18-20)***

This attitude had been developing for a while. Uzziah didn’t wake up that morning and decide ‘Yeah I don’t need the priests to intercede for me.’ That attitude had been brewing underneath the surface for a while.

God sets up worship of Him whether it’s with the Tabernacle or Temple or today in the local church that worship is corporate and team oriented. And worship is coming to God in humility recognizing our need for Him; not our arrogantly saying I don’t need others.

And here’s the ironic thing about Uzziah’s burning of incense. What did that symbolize? Prayer!! Prayer is our coming to God because we don’t have all the answers. We can’t live our life in our own strength. We need direction from God and the support and gifts of others. When we studied the Tabernacle a few years back and spent time on the altar of incense we learned that prayer was designed to be a holy partnership of the people and priests. Only the priests could enter the holy of holies and burn incense which symbolically offered up prayers to God. The order was sacrifice for sins first; getting right with God and then asking God for your needs. You can’t come to God on your own. You need a Mediator. However, the priests could only burn the incense if the people provided the spices for it. That was their part. The priests didn’t have to provide for that, they just did the burning. And it was a unique spice mixture that you could never use for anything else other than

prayer. So the people provided the spices and stayed outside the holy place praying, while the priests offered the incense to God inches away from the ark of the covenant. And how did you know the priests were faithfully interceding on your behalf? You would always smell it. And that continual smell reminded you that God heard your prayers.

We still can't approach God on our own. Our sins first have to be dealt with through the blood of Jesus. For the first time for salvation but also each time we come to Him because if we harbour sin and unforgiveness towards someone else God says I'm not ready to forgive you (Matt. 6:14-15). And we all need a church family because 1 Cor. 12-14 says no one has all the spiritual gifts. And your gifts were given you by the Spirit to serve others not yourself. And when we forsake the assembling of one another it means we abandon the others because they are incomplete without our gifts.

God punishes Uzziah immediately by giving him leprosy which appears on his forehead, a disease that immediately declares you unclean and disqualifies you from worshipping God with any people, lest they also contract leprosy from you.

### ***Different levels of disobedience bring different levels of consequence (vv.21-23)***

He essentially loses his throne because he can't be with people. His son Jehoram is placed on the throne and rules on dad's behalf the rest of dad's days. One mistake; one moment of selfishness ruined his testimony and ministry. And again, another king doesn't finish well.

That one moment was the result of discontentment. He wasn't appreciative to God for all the blessings he already had. He didn't appreciate the people in his life who helped him achieve all he had. He didn't glorify God through his blessings and successes, he arrogantly thought he was the captain of his own ship and the master of his own soul and didn't feel he needed anyone else. He thought he was above the Word of God.

None of us are. All of us can implode like Uzziah if we're not careful. 1 Pet. 5:5 reminds us

*<sup>5</sup>In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows grace to the humble." <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup>Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

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