

Sermon Mark S. Aites
UZZIAH: LIFTED UP WITH PRIDE

TEXT: Prov. 16:18

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 CHRON. 26:14-21

INTRODUCTION:

1. Uzziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.
 - 1) There is no mention of his heart not being perfect.
 - 2) He reigned some 52 years in Jerusalem and accomplished a great deal (**26:6-10**).
2. There is, however, one note that is unique to Uzziah's case: *as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper (26:5)*.
3. Uzziah himself was well known: he was a builder and a great military man: the Bible says *his name spread far abroad (26:15)*.
4. Then there is that surprising comment: *for he was marvelously helped, till he became strong*.
5. Up to a certain point, God was with him, allowing him to prosper:
26:16 *But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.*
6. **Prov. 16:18** warns: *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

DISCUSSION:

I. THE PREFACE.

- A. It is in this portion of the lesson, that we want to consider what it was that led to this king's downfall.
- B. There seems to be little doubt from the text that the thing which led to his downfall was material prosperity.
 1. With God's blessing, Uzziah defeated his enemies, and in his great victories, he built great cities around them.
 2. His might was known far into the great land of Egypt.
 3. He built towers and wells; he had a large number of cattle both in the low country and in the plains; he had vineyards in the mountains; he had a huge army (307,500); a great number of mighty men (2600), whereas king David only had 30 mighty men.
 4. His great army had spears and helmets, and harbergeons (coats of armor); bows and slingshots; and he even had "engines" on the towers and on the bulwarks (corners), great catapults that would shoot arrows and stones.
 5. For the day and time in which he lived, there is no doubt that this king prospered greatly. His achievements were far above others of the same time.
 6. All of this was possible because God had caused this king to prosper.
- C. But note in this story that something in this was missing; he suffered no defeats, no calamities, no problems; only continual material prosperity.
 1. It reminds me once of a charge that satan made to God concerning Job; that God had made a hedge around him (**Job 1:10**).
 2. Uzziah had a life of tremendous blessings without the obstacles that people often face in life: or at least, there is no mention of obstacles that I am able to find in our story).
 3. It helps us to understand this when we read that he was *marvelously helped*.

- D. Sometimes people fail to understand that setbacks can actually be helpful, that they actually can be good for you.
1. It is especially hard for young people to not get everything they want in life.
 2. **Illus.** When I lived at home with my parents, I wanted first a minibike, then a small motorcycle, but my father wouldn't buy one for me.
 - 1) When I was an adult, moved out and married, I bought a motorcycle for myself.
 - 2) I never seemed to have very good luck with it spilling it twice in a rain storm.
 - 3) I used to think my dad was not fair: but now I see the wisdom in his decision not to buy me a motorcycle.
- E. Sometimes in our prayers, God answers our prayers with a "no" answer.
1. Jesus said: **Matt. 6:8** ...*For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*
 2. **1 John 5:14** *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*
 3. God indeed hears us and knows what we need; but sometimes for our own good He says "No".
 4. Does that mean that God doesn't love us? Quite the contrary; it is not always good that you get everything you ask for.
 5. It may be more unloving to give you what you ask for, as it may be to your own hurt, even though you don't realize it when you ask for it.
- F. If Uzziah were living today the world would laud him as the epitome of success; but, he is not the first, nor the last man to be destroyed by success.
- G. Money and possessions themselves are not wrong; but it is the attitude that one develops when he is greatly blessed that often is the problem.
1. **1 Tim. 6:10** *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*
 2. The love of money, power, prestige, possessions have greatly affected far too many people.
 3. It becomes the root of all evil or all kinds of evil because one sin leads to another.
 4. In such a mindset, what often happens is the proverbial picture of one sin being piled atop another, and another.

II. THE PROBLEM.

- A. Uzziah's prosperity and greatness brought him to the point that *he was strong*.
1. **2 Chron. 26:16** *But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction...*
 2. Apparently Uzziah reached a point where he began to believe in his mind that all of his great accomplishments were all his own doing.
 3. His attitude had become like the rich man in the parable that Jesus told in **Luke 12:16-21** *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.*
17 *"And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'*
18 *"So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.*
19 *'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years;*

take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." '

20 *"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

21 *"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

- 1) The rich man was also blessed in the parable; the ground brought forth much fruit.
 - 2) He determined to build bigger barns to hold all of his goods.
 - 3) But the rich man's attitude was wrong: 6 times he used the pronoun "I", and 5 times, "my".
 - 4) Uzziah was much like this, and his pride and self-esteem had gone to his head.
- B. Sometimes, if we are not careful, we might in our own lives tend to think that our accomplishments are all our own doing.
1. **Rom. 12:3** *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*
 2. The preacher, not the statesman, Benjamin Franklin, was said to have baptized some 10,000 people in his ministry; yet he remained a humble man, never boasting, as some do, "look at what I have done."
 3. Whatever we do, it should always be to the glory of God.
 4. **1 Cor. 10:31** *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*
- C. In our story, Uzziah's sin was then compounded, for his pride led him to commit a presumptuous sin.
1. *Presumptuous* - is defined as "bold and daring; where one oversteps his bounds and takes liberties." (Wendell Winkler)
 2. So it carries with it the idea of doing something even when we know that it is wrong.
 3. David labled such sin as *great transgression*.
Psa. 19:13 *Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.*
- D. Uzziah's presumptuous sin was to go into the temple of God and to burn incense upon the altar of incense (**26:16**).
1. According to the Mosaic law, only a priest was permitted to burn incense upon the altar.
 2. The altar of incense was not in the most holy place (holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant would have been found), but it was in a chamber or area *before the veil* (**Exod. 40:26; 1 Kings 6:20**).
 3. Again, this was an area only for a priest!
 4. Even kings were not permitted to intrude into such parts of the temple.
 5. Temple service was for the sons of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi; referred to as the Levitical priesthood (**Num. 3, 4**).
- E. It is quite obvious from our text that Uzziah did that which was quite clearly a blatant sin.
1. The high priest went into the temple after him.

2. And not only the high priest, but also 80; count them, 80 of the priests who served in the temple, described as worthy or valiant men.
3. Put it in perspective here: 81 men of God follow this king into the temple, so it is not as if he didn't know better.
4. And even if for some reason he didn't understand the consequences of his actions, the priests made it crystal clear to him.
26:18 *And 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. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the Lord God."*
5. I don't know how much plainer they could have made it to him: "You are in the wrong place, you are trespassing, you are not going to get any honor for this"
- F. Now instead of this king acknowledging that he was clearly in the wrong; he instead became furious; the original word literally means "to boil up."
- G. It is sad that even in our own day, people continue to commit presumptuous sins; and when they are confronted with the truth, instead of repenting and expressing godly sorrow, they become angry.
 1. Preachers will go to them; and elders and deacons, godly members and faithful workers in the kingdom of God, but they refuse to listen.
 2. It is hard for people who have been lifted up with pride to admit when they are wrong.
 3. They have believed a certain way all of their lives, and no matter what the Bible says, they refuse to change.
 4. Their fathers and mothers have believed a certain way; grandparents and other relatives a certain way, but even though they know it is wrong, they refuse to obey the truth.
 5. Tragically, on the judgment day there are going to be souls that are eternally lost; who through life, because of pride, refused to admit they were wrong, who refused to open their eyes and hearts to the clear teaching of God's Word.
 6. The apostle Paul says of such that *the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:4).*
 7. Paul writes of those who hear the truth and choose to reject it: *And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11-12).*
 8. Certainly, the way of pride is the way that leads to destruction.

III. THE PUNISHMENT.

- A. **26:19** *Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar.*
- B. It now became very obvious of God's displeasure regarding Uzziah's pride and presumptuous sin.
 1. The Proverb writer tells us that there are 7 things that God hates; a proud look is at the top of the list (**Prov. 6:16-19**).

2. *The Lord will destroy the house of the proud... (Prov. 15:25).*
 3. **Prov. 16:5** *Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.*
- C. Uzziah was punished with leprosy.
1. The very thought of what leprosy entailed is disturbing.
 2. Generally, when we hear the word, we think of ulceration, the loss of fingers, or the smell of rotten flesh.
 3. But in Scripture, all cases were not so severe, as in the story of Naaman; none the less, it was still quite disturbing to God's people.
 4. Tragically, the Bible tells us that Uzziah remained a leper even until the day of his death.
 5. Uzziah, the once great and prosperous king, was forced to live out the rest of his life in isolation (as per the Mosaic law, **Num. 12:9-15**).
 6. His son Jotham then reigned and judged the people in his place.
 7. After Uzziah's death, he was buried in the field of the kings, but not in the royal sepulchers; so even in his death, the lesson of his sin would be remembered.
- D. How sad that a man who had everything in life, who was so greatly blessed of God, lost it all because he became lifted up with pride. And not just losing all of the prosperity, but then to live out his remaining days as a leper, unclean among the children of God.
- E. I realize that the Lord does not smite the proud in our own time with leprosy, as He did Uzziah; but biblical examples like this should remind us that pride and presumptuous sin will not go unpunished.
1. **James 4:6** *... "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*
 2. **Psa. 138:6** *Though the Lord is on high, Yet He regards the lowly; But the proud He knows from afar.*
- F. Those today that hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and because of pride refuse to submit themselves to God's will, need to realize that they will suffer a fate far worse than leprosy.
1. In the judgment there will be those who I feel sure would plead for leprosy instead of hell, if it were possible.
 2. But we know that it simply is not the case.
 3. Paul writes: **2 Thess. 1:7-9** *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*
 4. **Rev. 20:15** *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus says, *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3).*
2. Song: *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:10).*
3. **Prov. 16:19** *Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.*

4. So often, people think that riches are the tangible: the gold, silver, money which all, with the wrong spirit, can lead one away from God.
5. The real riches are yet to be realized, in that spiritual abode which we call Heaven.
6. You recall, that Jesus, on one occasion, set a little child in the midst of His disciples.
 - 1) They were squabbling with one another about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.
 - 2) **Matt. 18:4** *"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*
7. Parable: **Luke 18:10-14** *Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*
 - 11** *"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.*
 - 12** *'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'*
 - 13** *"And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'*
 - 14** *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*
8. Humility is the key that leads to eternal life; and it is important that we remain humble.