

Lesson from Uzziah's Rise and Fall

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When we study people in the Bible, what we often discover is that they are very much like you and I. We can identify with them because the same struggles with temptations, fall into the same sins and also are found doing what is right.

This morning I would like to talk about a king in Old Testament times. His throne name was Uzziah and his personal name was Azariah. This king started out very well, but unfortunately pride and arrogance led to his downfall. It is my hope that we learn from King Uzziah's mistakes and always maintain a strong personal walk with the Lord.

My first text comes from 2 Chronicles 26:1-5:

Now all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. He built Elath and restored it to Judah, after the king rested with his fathers. Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.

As a king, Uzziah got off to a great start. Verse 4-5 tells us the key to Uzziah's early success. ***He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.***

Because young King Uzziah sought the Lord and guidance from God's word, and listened to his spiritual guide and mentor Zechariah, the Lord gave him success.

Now here is the first spiritual principle: *Seek the Lord and live according to his Word and have a spiritual guide -- someone that can help you on your spiritual journey.*

Uzziah had a spiritual guide in Zachariah.

As a young king, Uzziah used his position and power well. He had a successful, well-equipped army. He built towers and strengthened the wall of Jerusalem to protect the people from foreign invaders.

And because Uzziah honored the Lord in all things, God blessed him with abundance from his livestock, fields, vineyards and there was peace in the land.

If we want the blessings of God and peace of God in our hearts, walk in the ways of the Lord and keep His commandments.

The second spiritual principle- *Put the Lord first place in our lives. We will enjoy a certain measure of success.* It does not automatically mean we will win the lottery and all of our problems will go away, but God will see that we are provided for and will watch over us.

When we lived at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma there was a nearby town called Moore which was heavily damaged from a destructive tornado on May 3, 1999. One week after the tornado, I went to the outskirts of the town to conduct a funeral for a military retiree and afterwards I walked around to see the after effects of the tornado.

I remember one house where the windows were shattered and the roof was gone. Ruined clothes, toys, and household goods that were scattered on the lawn. But spray painted on one of the bedroom walls was this message: ***"Thank you Jesus for sparing our lives."***

Although the family members who lived in this house had lost all their material possessions, they were blest because they know what was important.

American Perspective of Blessing:

Good Health plus Money plus Comfortable Life Style and Problem Free Existence equals God's Blessing.

Biblical Perspective of Blessing:

Knowing Jesus plus Forgiveness of Sins plus Trials and Troubles equal God's Blessing.

Paul the Apostle had the right perspective when he wrote in Philippians 3:10 **"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering"**. We can be blest and at the same time suffer.

King Uzziah's early reign was marked with success and prosperity, but that was the beginning of the end. The first clue

comes from verse 15 **So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong.**

Then it got worse.

Verse 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.

It seemed that King Uzziah's success and prosperity proved to be his undoing.

Apparently, he was not content with what God had given him as he sought to add the role of a priest to his royal power. Perhaps he thought he was much better than the priests. The consolidation of government power and religion did not work in this instance.

Sometime ago in a televised speech, PGA golfer Tiger Woods apologized for the extramarital affairs that brought negative publicity and lost income in commercial sponsorships. Tiger is an example of how athletic success can lead to pride and a sense of entitlement:

He said "I knew my actions were wrong, but I convinced myself that normal rules did not apply. I never thought about who I was hurting. I thought I could get away with whatever I wanted to.

I felt that I had worked hard my entire life and deserved to enjoy all the temptations around me. I felt I was entitled. Thanks to money and fame, I didn't have to go far to find them. I was wrong. I was foolish. I don't get to play by different rules. The same boundaries that apply to everyone apply to me. I brought this shame on myself".

So may we be content with what we have and not be desirous to add influence or power or authority that negatively impacts on others.

Verse 17 tells us what happened next when Uzziah went into the temple.

2So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD; valiant men. 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." 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. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he *was* leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

A priest primarily does one of two things. They offer burnt offerings on the bronze altar. And they offer incense on the golden altar. In the Jewish faith, only priests could perform these roles and Uzziah should have known better.

King Uzziah was one of the greatest kings to rule Judah, but in the end, he died in public disgrace as a leper. Excluded from the

temple, forced to live in a separate house, he ended his days in isolation. It was tragic. It did not have to happen.

The life of King Uzziah is a sobering. His life was a combination of success and prosperity, but in time he thought he was invincible. He became proud who thought he was superior to priests and exempt from the rules of the temple.

John Maxwell "***There are two kinds of pride, both good and bad. Good pride represents our dignity and respect. Bad pride is the sin of superiority that reeks of conceit and arrogance.***

The lessons that we can learn from Uzziah's mistakes.

- When God blesses us with success, let us stay humble, not become arrogant.
- We need to be cautious that when we are blessed with prosperity, not let it go to our heads. To be content with what we have.

The lessons that we can learn from Uzziah's early good points:

- His dedication and devotion to God, made him successful in his early life.
- He chose to listen to his spiritual guide the prophet Zachariah.

Let me close, we should have the good pride which represents our dignity and respect. And be determined to finish our spiritual journey well. Let us dedicate our lives to Christ and live for him.