

Uzziah - A Great King

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a wee while to the chapter we read in 2 Chronicles, chapter 26. And we will be looking a little at the previous chapter as well, because a wee bit of the background is important to understand this man, Uzziah.

At one sense you could almost title this, How to Blow a Lifetime's Good Work in One Day. But that's not exactly true. It wasn't just in one day. The process to the place where Uzziah really blew it took a wee bit of time.

So I want us just to think a wee bit about this King Uzziah. And the thing is, as the New Testament tells us, sometimes we say when we go to the chapters of history that God has wanted recorded, we sometimes say to ourselves, why are we reading this?

But the New Testament tells us that all these things are there for our instruction. God has put them there so that we will learn from the way that people acted, or what they did, and the ways that they did right, and the ways that they did wrong.

And all these things are there for our instruction and for our edification. Now, this King Uzziah seemed to be a very, very good man.

[1 : 25] That's initially what we see. And he came to the throne at the very young age of 16. And that's an incredibly young age to become a king. In fact, it says elsewhere, Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child.

And it's because when you think, can you put your own mind back, or if there's anybody here of that age, you put your own mind back to what you were like at the age of 16.

And imagine taking over all the authority and rule of the land. Because you don't have the experience, you don't have the maturity, you don't have the understanding or knowledge at that particular time.

You may have the energy of youth, and you may be able to bring, and you would be able to bring many things, but you couldn't bring the experience, the maturity, and all that that's necessary for making informed decisions.

Because you've got to remember, the king, back in those days, was very authoritative. And his word really was rule. Now, Uzziah came to the throne at a very difficult time.

[2 : 27] Because Judah, the land of Judah, was in turmoil. His father, Amaziah, had been murdered. Amaziah's father, Joash, had also been murdered.

Joash's father, Ahaziah, had been murdered. And Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, who went on to the throne after she was executed.

So, when you look at this young man of 16 coming on to the throne, the history of his father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and his great-great-grandmother is one of blood.

They've all died. They've all been killed, executed, murdered, while king. And so, you say to yourself, the most dangerous place to sit on a throne in Judah is, as I say, the most dangerous place a person could be.

But anyway, this is how it turns out. That this young man comes to the throne. And the great thing that we read in verse 4 is, And he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord.

[3 : 37] And you say to yourself, that's great. And see what it then adds. He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father, Amaziah, had done. All right?

So you say to yourself, Amaziah, he must have been a good king as well. And it's here we need to stop. Because you say to yourself, how come Amaziah was murdered? How come that they turned against him, chased him out, and then a conspiracy to murder him?

Surely, that's not the end you'd expect for somebody who did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. But the thing is, that if we go back, just for a moment, to chapter 25, to see Amaziah's reign.

He reigned for 25 years. We see this in chapter 25. But the key to it was this. Verse 2. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.

That was the key to Amaziah's life. And that was the key to his downfall. The Bible tells us that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

[4 : 48] In other words, if our heart is not right, if there is division in our heart, in other words, if our heart is going one way and the other, at the same time, if there is an allegiance to God, but there's also an allegiance, an equal allegiance to other things, the other gods, other idols within our heart, we're on a collision course in life.

And usually, if there is a divided heart, it tends to be the idols ultimately win. And that's exactly what happened with Amaziah.

Amaziah's life is a warning to us. Because he, as we say, he did, he did, he followed, he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.

And as I say, that always leads to problems. We're told in the Bible, watch your heart, because out of it come the issues of life. Do you know what it says? As a person thinks in his heart, that is how he or she is.

Who's the real you? It's not what people see for an hour or a few hours in a week. It's not what even people see at home. It's what goes on in there.

[6 : 03] That's how God sees. God sees our heart, our thinking, our motives, the way we really are. That's how God measures our life. Remember when David was chosen as king, and all his brothers were brought forward, and God said to Samuel, I'm going to anoint one of these sons as king, sons of Jesse.

One after another came by, and Samuel said, he's looked at this big fellow, strapping fellow, and he said, oh, that's bound to be the king. And God said to him, no, no, don't judge on the outward.

I don't. I judge on the heart. And that's how David was taken. Because David's heart was right with God. And you make sure that whatever else is wrong or right in your life, that your heart is right with God.

Because if it's not, it will lead to problems. It will lead to trouble. As it did very much so with Amaziah. Amaziah. And when we, just for two minutes with Amaziah, Amaziah, and he came to the throne, and everything he was doing to begin with was good.

And then we read with Amaziah that he assembled the men of Judah in verse 5, and he was going to war.

[7 : 19] And we find there that he had assembled 300,000 choice men, but he felt that he didn't have enough. So he hired 100,000 mighty men of valor from Israel.

That is people who are, I suppose, in a sense you could say missionaries. For 100 talents of silver, which is the equivalent of over, well, about 1,200,000 pounds, around about that.

So he hired them for that. And he thought, I've got enough soldiers now. But God sent the prophet, and he said to Amaziah, hey, don't go to war with these men.

See these Israelites, the 100,000? If you go to war with them, I won't be with you. Because Israel, remember how the kingdom of Israel had divided into two. After the reign of Solomon, Solomon's son, there was Rehoboam, was Solomon's son, and Jeroboam rose up in rebellion, and Israel divided into two.

Judah remained loyal to David, and to Solomon, and to Rehoboam. Israel divided, and they went after Jeroboam. So there was a big division in the land with two kingdoms.

[8 : 37] And they were always in conflict. Now the kings in Israel were in a downward spiral of evil. The kings in Judah were mixed. God said, I am not with Israel.

They have defied me. They have thrown me aside. They have turned completely to idolatry. I'm not with them. You take these 100,000 soldiers with you, you will lose.

The Messiah said, oh, all right, I understand. And he listened to what the prophet said. But then, then he said, what am I going to do with the million over the million?

I paid over a million pounds. I've lost that money. And we find that there was that great, this is a great statement, that, see, when we go back there to verse 7, but a man of God came and said, oh king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel, with all these Ephraimites.

And you know, this is very important. Make sure that your alliances in life are right. That you're not allied with those that hate the Lord.

[9 : 51] And then, Amaziah is saying, Amaziah said to the man of God in verse 9, but what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel? I've paid over a million pounds.

What's going to happen to that money? See the answer. The man of God answered, the Lord is able to give you much more than this. It's not amazing.

In other words, Amaziah, you do what's right, forget that million pounds. It's alright. Because the Lord is saying, if you do what I'm telling you, I will make that up to you.

In fact, I will make it up far more. And we've always got to remember this, that we're told that the Lord has the cattle, that's what the psalm says, the cattle on a thousand hills belong to him.

I'm not sure the price of a beast, but you take a thousand hills throughout this world, and all the cattle on it, and tot up, that's going to be some price.

[10 : 52] But more than that belongs to him. Because we're told, the earth belongs unto the Lord, and all that it contains. And you take all the resources, all the oil, all the gas, all the coal, you take all this gold, and all the silver, and all the precious metals, the diamonds, and begin to value that.

I doubt you'll have a calculator, that's able to calculate, the vast amount, if you're to put it into money, of what that is. It all is his.

He is the creator God. And that's what he's saying. And we've always got to remember that. That everything belongs to the Lord.

He wants us also to give to him. That's what we do when we give, we give a collection, when we come to church. And the Lord in fact tells us in Malachi, it's the only time really you'll find the Lord saying, prove me now, prove me.

Imagine God saying to us, prove me. But he says, you bring in the tithe, you bring in that tithe to me. And he says, prove me now, I will open the windows of heaven, and pour out such a blessing, that you won't have room enough to receive it.

[12 : 09] God says, prove me. It's quite an extraordinary statement. You find that in Malachi chapter 3. And so, this is what the Lord is saying to this king. Look, he said, forget that, forget that money.

I can sort it, I'll sort that out. What I'll do for you is I'll help you in battle. So, when you look at the life of Amaziah, you're saying, oh well, everything's going well. He's a good king.

But after the victory, what happened? He became puffed up with his own pride. And he forgot that it was God who enabled him to get the victory. And what did he do?

He took the idols from the nations around, set them up, and began to worship them. And when he did that, God turned against him.

He turned to idolatry. And the moment he did that, it all went wrong. That's how he ended up being murdered. Because, he blew it all.

[13 : 07] That's the background that Uzziah came from. And there comes a moment in Uzziah's life, where he mirrors his father. And you know, it's an incredibly solemn thought.

I often think about this, and when I was studying, looking at these chapters, I thought, and particularly with that baptism, next Lord's Day, our children don't set out to exactly mirror us.

But you know something? They end up doing that. So often, you will find that the children, I say grow bigger, you will find characteristics, and traits, and resemblances, and you will find so many things.

And you will see things in their lives, and you will say, phew, I know where he got that. I know where she got that. That's from the mother. That's from the father. That's from the grandfather.

That's from the grandmother. It runs through. You see it. But also, not just things that we pass on by the nature, but our practices, what we do, and you will often see it following on.

[14 : 18] And you hear the expression, oh, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. When you see, you see these things following on from generation to generation. There's the resemblance, the mirroring.

Well, that's exactly what was happening here. That's exactly what happened in Uzziah's life as well. He didn't fall in the same way as his father did, but he fell because pride got hold of him.

He forgot that it was God who made him who he was. And so we find that, Uzziah, we find that lovely verse, and that's really, I never read it at the beginning, because that would be our text.

He set himself, verse 5, he set himself 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.

Isn't that lovely? As long as he sought, every day, that's what it means. When it says this, he set himself to seek the Lord. When it says he set himself, that means that was his pole position, his prime position, his default position.

[15:31] Every day when he got up, he says, you know what? Lord, I want to seek you. I want to have you, Lord, at the front of my life. Lord, will you guide my life? I want to follow you.

That's what he's doing. And I hope that's the way we begin our days. I hope that's the way we live, so that we have the Lord in front of us, and we follow the Lord. Well, that's what this king did.

That doesn't mean that every single day of our life, we live in complete dependence, following the Lord in the way we should. We sin, we fail, we get it wrong. But when we do, we go back to him. Because we love him, and we want to follow him, and we say to him, Lord, I'm sorry for what I have done. But you see the result of seeking the Lord constantly. As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

Isn't that wonderful? Everything Uzziah did, God worked it in Uzziah's life that it was going to come good for him, and come good for the kingdom. And when you read through this chapter, you see how he prospered, how he got on.

[16:38] Everything blossomed. Everything flourished. The nation did really, really well. And you know, God will bless you too if you seek him. That doesn't mean that he's going to take every difficulty out of your life, but he will enrich your life.

And he will bless your life with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. And you cannot put a price on that. And so, we find that this is how it went for Uzziah.

And we must be thankful for every gift that we receive from the Lord, because the Lord, the Lord fills our life with good things. You stop for a moment and think back over your life. And maybe just now, your life is full of hassles.

And you say to yourself, oh, you know this, every day, every day, you know, sometimes we need to stop. And like the little children's chorus, it's so important in a sense to stop.

Count your blessings. Name them one by one. And it will surprise you or amaze you what God has done. And we must start doing that.

[17:47] Let's stop. Let's think. Let's remember what God has done for us. And then when you look through this chapter, verses 6 and 7, you see his military strength.

We see his conquests. And the key to his conquests in verse 7 is, God helped him. Because he sought the Lord. Remember that.

If you take nothing away from this sermon, remember that. Key. Because he set himself to seek the Lord, God helped him.

These two things go together. They always go together. It will be through every day, every year of your life. The two will go together. Cannot separate them.

And so, he set himself to seek the Lord. But do you notice there's a word of caution. Go back to this text. Verse 5. He set himself to seek God when?

[18:45] 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.

I notice a wee word of caution there. It doesn't say, I would love that the verse said, he set himself to seek the Lord all his days, which would be said of David.

No. Notice what it says. He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah who instructed him in the fear of God. Here was his mentor. Here was a man who took a real interest.

Here was a spiritual giant who took an interest in Uzziah. And he was there and he was encouraging him and he was guiding him and he was helping him and he was teaching him in the way of the Lord.

And as long as Zechariah was there, Uzziah followed the Lord. Do you know this? That happens so often in life. And you will see people, it's in the history of the church, and people who are so diligent and so attentive at the means of grace, so involved in everything, and then a parent dies or their parents die and they begin to drift.

[19:57] They begin to disappear. The attendance gets less and less. The interest becomes less and less. The influence that was so profound because that influence isn't there.

They begin to dwindle. They begin to go. It's a solemn, it's a challenging thing. But that happened with, see that's why the Lord has put all these things there for us. For our instruction, for warnings, for encouragements.

Uzziah, he had a giant of faith beside him and as long as that man was there, Uzziah was on the right road. He was seeking the Lord. When Zechariah went, things changed.

Which shows that his commitment was not as deep as he thought it was. His following was not as great as he thought it was. He thought he was better than he was.

And that's one of the big mistakes we can make in life. Well you see, Uzziah got on so well, his military conquest. And you know, one of the lovely things about Uzziah is that when he conquered the land, he built cities there.

[21 : 05] And he had people paying tribute, appeasement money. So in other words, he wasn't a cruel dictator. He didn't go and destroy all the people. He conquered the land and he built cities.

He established rule there so that the people still managed to live there but they paid tribute to him. Which shows that he had a kind heart. So when you read through Uzziah's name and you come to verse 15, in Jerusalem, he made engines invented by skillful men to be on the towers and the corners to shoot arrows and great stones.

And his fame spread far for he was marvelously helped till he was strong. Notice these words. So verses from the beginning to verse 15, Uzziah, your life is one of success and one where God is at the center.

But here's the change. But when he was strong, he grew proud to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God.

[22 : 14] Isn't that solemn? Here was a man and his fame went everywhere. And all of a sudden, you know the worst thing a person can do is believe the good press about themselves.

Watch when people speak well of you. There's nothing wrong with people speaking well of you. It's what you do with what people speak well of you.

If you begin to believe this, don't get me wrong, it's good to encourage one another. And it's good to do that. And there's nothing wrong with people thinking well of other people.

The problem is what does the person who people think well of think? And if you begin to believe the press and begin to become puffed up and begin to take the credit yourself and say, oh, I'm going to die good, I'm going to die getting on, I'm going to die this, I'm going to die, I'm going to die that. Look out. Destruction. The fall. That's what happened to Uzziah. He started to believe his own press and he began to take the credit to himself.

[23 : 29] He forgot it was God that had given him every victory. It was God who had elevated him. It was God who had given him the mind to work. God had done everything for him. And all of a sudden he began to say, am I great?

And that was the beginning of the end. But when he was strong, he grew proud to his destruction, for he was unfaithful to the Lord as God. Faithfulness is key to our lives.

Faithful to God. It's not, as I said before, about what we're like at work or at home. That's important as well. It's what goes on in here.

Are we faithful to God? Because if we're not within our heart, it won't be long until it'll happen outside. the seeds of destruction always begin in here.

What we are in here eventually comes out. That's a fact. What we are in here will eventually show itself. And that's what happened with Uzziah.

[24 : 35] And what Uzziah did was this. He was king. Now the king, you couldn't, the king couldn't be priest. God had set a division between these two things. And it was absolutely forbidden for the king to take on the priestly duties.

But Uzziah had become so full of himself he marched into the temple and he says, I'm going to do the sacrifices today. I'm king here. And he took the incense and he went to offer sacrifice.

And Azariah who would be the high priest went after him and he said, King Uzziah, you can't. And Uzziah said, get out of my way. I'm king. And 80 of the priests, they all went after the king.

And they said, you can't do it. And we see what it says. They told him that you cannot, it's not for you to burn incense, but for the priests, the son of Aaron, who are consecrated.

Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong. It will bring you no honor from God. Uzziah was angry. How dare they speak to me like that?

[25 : 49] And notice what happens. In an instant, leprosy broke out on him. And you could see these 80 priests, they would all go, oh. Uzziah, his life changed from that day forevermore.

A leper was somebody who was separated from everybody. The king who had everything became the king who had nothing. He never ever, ever, ever, ever again got in to the temple.

But not only that, he never ever, ever again got into the palace. He had to go to a separate house. And history will tell us, although we cannot quite grab it from here, but all commanders will say that even when he was buried with his fathers, it says, in the burial field that belonged to the kings, that he wasn't buried exactly with them, but separate from them because he was a leper. He is a leper. This man Uzziah, who was known for all his great work and his great projects and everything he did, all he was remembered for at the end of the day was he was a leper. Because he defied God, he forgot God, he turned his back upon God, he took the place of God and you and I must heed these warnings.

[27 : 15] Sometimes these warnings that are given to us in scripture, they're really hard, they're heavy, but God has put them there for us to examine our own lives, to examine our own heart.

You ask yourself this question, am I today setting the Lord before me? am I setting the Lord before me to seek him every day?

Am I faithful to the Lord? And this is the person that the Lord will honor. Guard your heart with everything that you have because it has the potential to lead you to great places if the Lord is with you, but it has also the potential to bring you to ruin as both Amaziah and Uzziah found out.

Let us pray. O Lord, we pray that you will bless us. We give thanks for your word and all that it brings to us.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the teaching that's within it and help us to really heed what you're saying to us. We pray to bless us individually, bless us as a congregation.

[28 : 27] Bless all those, Lord, who are in need. We remember on Thursday the broken hearts that Marianne will be involved in this work.

We pray that this will indeed in time become a blessing to people, that there will be this group set up to help those who have really difficult issues, real hurts within their lives.

We give thanks, Lord, that we are able to engage with one another, and we give thanks that you are the one above all who are able to help. We pray that you will bless us, help us to be faithful to you.

Forgive us, Lord, for our unfaithfulness. Help us always to remember that you are always faithful.

Do us good, part us with your blessing, bless a cup of tea, coffee in the hall, and forgive us our every sin, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our concluding singing is from Psalm number 30, and this is from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 30 from the Scottish Psalter, on page 240, and we are going to sing verses 5 to 8 in the tune of St.

[29 : 50] Minver, for but a moment lasts his wrath, life in his favour lies, weeping may for a night endure, at morn doth joy arise. In my prosperity I said that nothing shall me move, O Lord, thou hast my mountain made, to stand strong by thy love.

But when thou, O gracious God, didst hide thy face from me, then quickly was my prosperous state turned into misery. Wherefore unto the Lord my cry I caused to ascend, my humble supplication I to the Lord did send.

5 to 8, the Tunisian Minver, Psalm 8. For but a moment of his love, I did his paper eyes, we think we fall, nomine Macer honorable beautiful I said, but nothing shall be good.

O Lord, the past, my mountain great, to stand strong by thy love.

But when thou, O gracious Lord, inspired thy face to me, then quivering all thy cross shall stay from his history.

[32 : 02] Wheremore unto the Lord my God thy causes to ascend, my humble supplication, my dear, the Lord is dead.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.