

Pride Brings Destruction

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[0 : 00] 2 Kings chapter 15 verse 1 if you would. Pride brings destruction. This is a story of a king. It's going to be 52 years of his life. He's going to start out right and end up wrong. I heard today about a friend who started out right and is ending up wrong. He's a lot younger than me but he's already blown his life and I thought as I heard the story this afternoon of what I'm preaching, this is vital for me and for you and for all of us. I'm going to read, I don't always do this, but there's only seven verses that I want to read here and then we're going to read a lot of verses as we go through the story in Chronicles but read with me if you would in 2 Kings 15 and verse 1.

In the 27th year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, began Asaiah, son of Amasaiah, king of Judah, to reign. He was 16 years old when he began to reign and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem and his mother's name was Jehoala of Jerusalem and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amasaiah had done save that the high places were not removed.

The people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places and the Lord smote the king so that he was a leper until the day of his death and dwelt in a several house, a separate house away from the king's house, away from the palace. And Jotham, the king's son, was made, was over the house judging the people of the land. And the rest of the acts of Azariah and all they did are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah. So Azariah slept with his fathers and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

Father, I pray that as we go through this passage of scripture and consider the story you're telling us and why you're telling us this story that we would be very careful to not be lifted up with pride because of how you've blessed us and not to forget where we started and not to get so used to blessings that we forget the origin of our blessings or the purpose of our blessing.

Now I know, dear God, that it is very easy for me to do that and very easy for your people to do that. And I pray, God, that tonight as you work in our lives, we would draw close to you. We would continue to watch and pray. We would continue to keep our shield lifted high.

[2 : 04] And your name would continue to be magnified in our life. And I'll give you praise for all. In Jesus' name, amen. Now we're going to be going to another passage in 2 Chronicles chapter 26. So you can kind of open your Bible there. Robert did a very good job talking to you about OMSI and how he did some right and how he messed up.

And you saw that. This is a new guy. If you got your Bible open to 2 Kings, I want to show you some things here that I'm not going to show you in the message because they left me plenty of time. So I'm going to throw in some extras for you. Look, if you went in verse 2, he was 16 years old.

And then I want you to underline in verse 2, he reigned 52 years. And I don't know what you think about this, but I wish you'd just listen to me and pay attention. As a pastor and an older brother in the Lord, and somebody's been doing this a long time, it's pretty easy to serve God and be pretty excited about it for a few years.

It's pretty easy. Like, I don't know. I was thinking while they were singing, and I was thinking of what we talked about in the other room, and I was thinking about even in the Old Testament how you used to have them have special services and actually set up a tent outside or do all sorts of things to get people, get out of the rut, get out of the routine, get out of what you do all the time, and consider what's going on.

I was thinking about that. I was thinking about how they used to have revival meetings. If you ever lived in the old days in Georgia, Tennessee, in the spring there was a revival, in the fall there was a revival. And everybody got excited about the revival, and for a week everybody was really revived.

[3 : 21] Of course, revival's over. We went to the next revival. We were dead between. We needed revived every time we got revived. And I just thought of these 52 years here. I want you to look at that. These 52 years this guy was a king, and he's going to do right a lot of that time, a good majority of that time.

And if you had time to read 2 Chronicles and you went through 2 Chronicles 26, it's amazing. He was a great farmer. He built up the army and the military. I promise you, he was in the business of making Israel great again.

He was that kind of president. He was that kind of king. And he was getting it done. But by the end of the story, he messed up. By the end of the story, he messed up. Now think about how many of us get our lives really right with God, and we start serving God, and we're living for God, and we do real good for 40 years or whatever, and then somewhere along the way we start getting cold on God, and our prayer life dies, and our hunger for God dies, and we begin to think like this guy.

So as you go through the story with me, I really wish you'd not think about a king, but I wish you'd think about you. I've been doing this a long time. I have preached hundreds of messages. I have no idea how many I've preached, but I have preached hundreds of messages, and I've been preaching and dealing with people and listening to stories and listening to things for a long time, and it's really easy to get commonplace.

It's really easy to take it for granted. I'm kind of wondering if that's what happened with this guy. The day he got coronado, how do you say it? Coronated. How do you say it in English? Crowned. Whatever.

[4 : 40] When they made him king, he was probably pretty excited about it. He was probably pretty awed, and he probably thought, I really got to do a good job. But 52 years later, he's pretty used to it.

He's used to being called king everywhere he goes. He's used to being accepted. He's used to being respected, and by now he's really starting to mess up. Just go through the story with me. Go to 2 Kings 15, verse 3. The guy starts off, number one, doing right.

Number one, doing right. The Bible says in 2 Kings 15, verse 3, And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. And he did like all that his father and Messiah had done.

He followed what daddy had done, and he did right. So I want you to look at the verse here, and I want you to underline this. He did right in the sight of the Lord. It wasn't what the people necessarily thought was right.

It wasn't what the culture called for, but it was what God wanted. He did right. And here's another beautiful lesson in there. He followed his dad's example in doing that right. It says in the scripture right there, according to all that his father had done.

[5 : 37] So I have a great deal of influence on my children and on my grandchildren, because they're watching me, and they've seen me, and they know me. I had the privilege of eating lunch today with a man who adopted some kids from an Indian reservation, and he was telling the story about how when they were young, and he disciplined them, and he said, they didn't listen to a thing I had to say.

And he said, well, one day I heard my adopted son disciplining his children, and I heard my tone of voice and the very words I used being said. He said, I thought to myself, I think he must have heard what I said.

See, that's what's going on in the verse. And so you and I have a great deal of influence as parents. He also had a godly advisor when he was a kid. Look at 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 5.

Now, when Uzziah and Uziah, both of those names are his, one's his name probably pre-king and who he really is, and the other is his king name that he uses in the palace and on the throne.

In 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 5 it says, And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, and Zechariah had an understanding in the visions of God.

[6 : 39] Look at that. So this guy had, this young king, had a man of God. Now, I checked, I was trying to find out who this Zechariah is, and nobody really knows who he was. It's not the other Zechariah that wrote the book. It's just another, there's a man of God in his life sharing truth and helping him to do right.

Life on life, discipleship, a relationship with the king, a mentor helping him do right. Could I just stop and say right there, that ought to show you something, that the young people in our church aren't what they ought to be, but if they had a Zechariah in their life, if they had somebody to say, I'm going to be your friend, I'm going to talk to you about the things of Jesus, I'm going to help you make decisions, and you may think to yourself, I don't know a lot, and I'm not some great big guru, but Zechariah had an understanding.

He understood what the Word of God said. That's all that means in the visions, in the prophetic vision, what God's got to say, and you know that. You know how to pray. You know how to walk with God, and you could evidently help some people.

He was seeking the Lord. He was seeking the Lord. Look at the verse, if you would. He sought God in the days of Zechariah. And you know what it means to seek the Lord? It means worshiping him. It means praying.

It means trying to find out what God's will was. You know, what happens is, when you seek the Lord, what you're doing is, God, I want to know what pleases you. I want to know what it takes for you to be happy with what I'm doing.

[7 : 52] It's what I did 44 years ago, 45 years ago, when I saw this girl I wanted to marry, I knew I had to figure out what it was to win her heart. I had to figure out what it would do to make this girl I've been married to for all these 44 years, what would it make, take her to turn her rich little Atlanta heart to a redneck from Tennessee.

I had to figure out what it would take to do that. And so I had to work at that. The first time we went out on a date, she writes to her mother and said, I had a date with a nice guy, but he's kind of redneck. And then she said, she told her friends, I only went out with him because he was with another guy.

We had a double date, and she liked the other guy. That other guy had two girls. I was all over there by myself. And I had to figure out, I had to figure out, that's what seeking means. You see, if I want to seek God, it means I'm always thinking about what does it take to please God?

What would God want me to do here? What would God have in mind for me? How should I be acting here? You know, you ought to be seeking God. You may be doing factory work, or you may be doing lawyer work, or you may be doing police work, but whatever work you're doing, it ought to be on your heart all the time.

Man, I love you, Jesus, and I want to please you. As I do my job here, I want to please you. That's what seeking the Lord means. It doesn't mean that you're off somewhere fasting and praying all the time. It can mean that. But the point is, I respect God, and I want to please him.

[9 : 06] It means to strongly desire something or someone. You see, Usai had a hunger for God. He sought God. He was like, God, I want to know you. God, I want to be used of you. God, I want to be blessed to you.

God, I want you to work in my life. So one of our deepest concerns ought to be here tonight is doing right in the eyes of the Lord. Every one of us, every one of us, all week long.

You're fixing to leave in just a little bit. You're going to go home. You're going to start up your week. And you know what you ought to do? You ought to be saying, I need to know what God wants because I want to please him all week long. I want to read my Bible and pray. I want to be in church.

I want to do right. I want God to say, you did right the way you loved your wife. You did right the way you raised your children. You did right the way you did your business. You did right. You did right in my eyes.

I want God to say it about me. Amen. I want to do that. Do we consider God and his will and his desires and all that we do? I'll always be thinking. I want to always be thinking. I wonder what God thinks about this.

[10 : 00] I'll never make a decision. I'll never do anything without thinking, what's God thinking about this? And by the way, if you're a good husband, you already do that for your wife. So you don't have this as a, this isn't a hard thing to understand. In fact, some of you, when you go, when you go buy that new fishing rod, you're like, oh boy, she ain't going to like this.

You think it right then and there. When you buy it, you may not be seeking to please her, but you're like, she won't like this. You hide it in the trunk so she doesn't see it because you're thinking about her. And so you ought to be thinking about the Lord all the time. We ought to make worship a priority.

It ought to become like the biggest and most important thing we do. It ought to be we seek the Lord and we want to do right. What kind of example are you leaving? What kind of influence are you leaving? Do we desire sincerely to please God and have his will for our life?

I'll just tell you, being a parent, being a grandparent, being a husband, being a mom is a place where it's called for that we do right. This guy started out doing right. This guy started out doing right and seeking the Lord.

That's a good enough message. We could almost go home. The story doesn't end there. Man, that'd be a great, if that was it, if we just ended it there, it'd be great. But the very next thing the Bible tells us about us is not all the way, not all the way.

[11 : 02] Look at 2 Kings 15 and verse 4. Look what the Bible says in 2 Kings 15 and verse 4. Save that the high places were not removed. Here's what it says. He sought the Lord.

He did what was right in the Lord's eyes except for this thing right here. That's what that word save means. It means except for. Except for the high places. You see, here's what God's will was.

God's will was for God's people to take God's offerings and go to the temple. God's people were supposed to take the offerings and go to the temple. There was a temple and they were supposed to go to the temple. But they wanted convenience.

And that's the real problem. This is where problems start in his life. He chose convenience over conviction. He chose what was easy over obeying God. And so what they did is they left the high places in place.

It says, say that the high places were not removed. And the people sacrificed and burnt incense still. Y'all sort of unlined that word, still. They weren't supposed to do that, but they still kept doing what they weren't supposed to do.

[11 : 57] And it's going to be a while before a king gets rid of that. And God's people were supposed to go to the temple to worship. But it was more convenient to go to the high place. You've got to understand there's one temple in all the country. If there was only one place here in Georgia or in the southeast, and that's the only place you'd go to it, especially if you had to walk around a donkey or a camel, it'd just be a lot easier to find a high place over here somewhere on the hill and go worship God and say, hey, I'm as close to God here on the lake, on the boat, as I'm anywhere else.

I'm just going to worship God here. It was convenient to go to the high places. The problem was, you know what else was going on at the high places? Even though they might have worshipped God at the high places, right beside them was the guy worshipping Baal. Right beside them was the guy doing things that weren't supposed to do, worshipping false gods and false idols and their pagan deities and demons that they're worshipping.

And here it is, the man of God trying to do right in the eyes of the Lord and trying to seek God. And he said, but, you know, I don't want to overpush the people. That's a problem I face as a pastor because you want to say, man, I need to make this as easy as possible.

I mean, other churches are all about convenience and other churches are all about comfort and no one's calling for a cross anymore. Often we want to do right, but we try to find the easiest and closest way to doing right without sacrifice.

Can I do right and it not cost me? Can I do right and it not cost me? Can I fit into society by worshipping in the same place, just worshipping another God? If they'd have seen their families packing up on the donkeys and the camels and getting all their stuff together and somebody comes out and says, what are you doing?

[13 : 13] He said, we're going to go down and worship God. Well, that's ridiculous. Why does your God want you to go to Jerusalem to the temple? You can go right up here on the same hill I worship the devil with and you can worship up there. And if they'd have said that, that would sure look foolish, wouldn't they, to the neighbor.

And so they were like, hey, I don't want anybody to think I'm a fanatic. I don't want anybody to think I'm going overboard. Are we seeking a convenient way to honor Christ? Is your life more about pleasing you and doing the convenient than it is about serving Christ?

Are we worshipping in the prosperity, wealth, light mode? You know, prosperity light. You see, in our society, there's these false preachers that we all just really despise and don't like them because the pastor's up there preaching about having a lot of money.

And in fact, it's the richest preachers in the world. I've read a list of 50 of them. Almost every one of them are prosperity gospel preachers. And they stand up and they tell you if you'll give money to God and you'll lie to God, God will make you rich.

And he just keeps making them rich. But in a way, that's the kind of preaching we want in our church. We want a preaching that says, hey, I want to serve God and I want God to be pleased with me, but I don't want to go all the way out. I don't want to do too much. I don't want a cross.

[14 : 13] Do we want to worship without obedience, Christianity without a cross, salvation without blood, and holiness without a hatred for sin? We're God's people. We're God's people. If a snake bit and killed your kid, I bet you'd hate snakes the rest of your life.

And you and I need to look at that sin and say, man, we hate sin. We're not trying to raise pet sins and keep them here just so we got them in as long as we got them in the aquarium. We are God's people, not the convenience. Go with me to 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 5 now.

So his obedience brought prosperity, brought blessings. As he obeyed God, God blessed him. I didn't read the whole verse to you a while ago, so I'm going to go back and read it while you're looking.

Well, I'm going to read it here. 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 5. He said, That's prosperity gospel, right?

Go ahead and underline it. As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. Here's a couple things to look at. I think it would be good to look at this. He sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

[15 : 15] He sought the Lord, God made him prosper. He did right, God made him prosper. It ought to be good to look at it and see, as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. In other words, as long as this man thought, I want to do what God wants me to do and I want to please him.

It was amazing. God was bringing blessings on him. God made him prosper. Now, if you want to know what that means, it tells you in 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 7. It explains what it means when it says that God made him prosper.

Because in 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 7, it says, And God helped him. Go down there and look at that. God helped him. So, in other words, when it said he made him prosper, God helped him when he went to fight the Philistines and Arabians and all that stuff.

It was God helped him. You want to underline that? In other words, as he sought God, God somehow stepped in there and said, I want to bless your business. I want to bless your fighting. I want to bless what you're doing on your daily life.

I'm going to bless you. So, as he sought the Lord, God blessed him. 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 7. That's got to be wrong. Chapter 17. I don't know what I did there. It says, And he made in Jerusalem engine, invented by cunning men to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks and to shoot arrows and great stones with all.

[16 : 17] And his name was spread far abroad, for he was marvelously helped. Would you underline? He was marvelously helped. You see that? God helped him, but he didn't just help him. I mean, he like over the top, abundantly, marvelously helped him to do the job until he was strong.

God made him strong. Now, he started out doing right, but even in doing right, he kept a little bit of sin there for himself. Kind of kept the convenience in. Didn't want to go all the way. Didn't want to crucify everything.

He gave up the world, but he didn't want to give up all the world. And now God's blessing him, and the blessings are coming quick and fast, and God is pouring it out on him. And then it says, God blessed him so people knew him and respected him.

Look, if you would, I'm sorry, guys. I've got things messed up in my notes here. For dumb numbers, you can, you just do it. No, you did 15. Y'all did real good. And he made in Jerusalem engines, and he invented, and it says here in verse 15, go down there.

It says, his name spread far abroad. Look at that. As God blessed him, man, everybody started hearing about him. He was marvelously helped until he was strong. Underline here, see, God's blessings caused him to be known.

[17 : 20] I want to stop here just a second because we're talking about a king. I'd like to talk about a businessman. I'd like to talk about a preacher so that you won't think I'm talking about you. So over here is a young preacher boy who's so hungry for God to use him, and he's begging God, and he's seeking God.

And he's saying, God, it's not a joke when I preach, and I'm just not going through the motions here. I love you, and I want to please you. And as he kept doing the ministry, God came in and helped him, and marvelously helped him. And as he helped him, God caused him to have blessings.

And people started realizing, boy, God's using him. And his name got lifted up. And people started talking about him and saying, that guy's a great preacher. That guy's getting a lot of job done. And he was marvelously helped until everybody was like, that's a man of God.

I did all that to talk to you about the businessmen so you don't think I'm talking about just people like me because us preachers have that problem. But this businessman's over here, and his business stinks, man. He's hungry, and he's begging God, I need help.

I need help finding a wife. I need help paying my bills. I need help getting clients. I need help getting work. And he begs God, and he begs God, and God begins to do a work in his life, and God starts helping him and blessing him.

[18 : 19] And the problem with all these helps and these blessings is God started doing it. And over here, I knew it was God because I was in trouble, and I was begging God. And then God helped and helped and helped, and all of a sudden, his name is known.

People realize, boy, that's a prosperous businessman. He's no longer driving a Corvair. He's got a Corvette now. He's no longer driving a car where he has to check the gas and add oil.

Or no, what is it? Put oil in and just check the gas because it's burning more oil than it is gas. I had those kind of cars. I fumigated the whole neighborhood. Say, man. Most young preachers have done some of that. And so he's no longer in that situation.

God's lifting him up, and his name is spread abroad. That's what happened to the king. And then it'll underline in verse 15. It's the last of the verses. It says, till he was strong. He got strong. Started out weak. He's 16 years old.

You can imagine what people were thinking when a 16-year-old took over the kingdom. Oh, boy. Got us a kid in there. He got pimples on his face. He don't know what he's doing. He ain't nobody. God ain't going to use him. The kingdom's in trouble. He's just a kid.

[19 : 14] Just a kid. But that kid was like, I know everybody thinks I can't, and I'm going to seek God, and I'm going to try to do right. And Zechariah, you help me, and as long as you direct me, and you're my youth worker, and you're my youth teacher, and you show me how to do things right, I'm going to do right.

And I'm going to seek God, and then God started helping him. And all of a sudden, we have no idea how many years have passed. All of a sudden, he's great. But once he got great, he liked it. And I have no idea what verse this is. Boy, it says, I think I'm all messed up up here.

I'm ready to shoot myself. But anyway, 2 Chronicles 26 in verse 8 in my notes, it says, The Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah, and his name spread abroad. Look at that. It was eight. Praise the Lord. Maybe I'm back on track.

See, this Lord humbled me again. Look at verse 8. His name spread abroad. All of a sudden, everybody's like, Uzziah, that's a great king. Uzziah, he's the boy king that became something, and he's really made a name for himself.

But you know what happened as soon as he started getting a name for himself? Look at verse 8 at the end of it. He strengthened himself exceedingly. Now, if you read that under normal circumstances, you wouldn't read it in context. You'd just say, well, the guy's working on doing a better job.

[20 : 10] But the truth is, over here, he was helpless, and he was seeking God. And it wasn't, the verses don't say anything about how he was getting better, how he was learning how to preach better, how he was learning how to be a better king.

It says he was seeking the Lord, and God helped him, and God marvelously helped him, and God helped him. And then all of a sudden, now it's like, well, I got here, and now I got to get better at it. And I got to keep building my name. And he strengthened himself exceedingly.

You see, God had poured out his blessings on Usai until he was strong and blessed and recognized and respected. Do you realize that it's God that made you and not yourself?

It would be a real wise move for us to just stop for a second and think that it wasn't your smarts that got you this far. It wasn't your hard work. Now, that's kind of hard, because some of us do get up earlier than everybody else.

And I mean, I put in long hours. I'm not talking about anybody out there. I'm talking about me. And sometimes when the other preacher's still in bed, I'm already up and working and praying, and it's pretty easy to begin to think, well, if they'd work as hard as I would, and they'd do what I'd do, and if they'd bust it, that's what we begin to think.

[21 : 08] And all of a sudden, we begin to think we did something. Well, you know, it's the way I preach. It's the way I study. It's the way I, and we begin to take all that on ourselves. And all of a sudden, one day, we realized there was a guy, when I was a boy, my dad went to pick up the McGahee kids in Wrigley, Tennessee.

And the McGahees, Mr. McGahee Vernon was a drunkard. And my dad would pull up to the house and literally step across his six foot seven frame, go in the house and pick up his children and put them in our car and take them to church.

And Mr. McGahee swore he was going to kill my dad because he was messing with his kids and taking them to church, and he didn't want them to have none of that God junk. And my dad, the people at the church said, you might ought to leave them alone because Vernon's going to kill you.

And my dad kept taking those kids to church, and then one day Vernon got saved. You don't understand this, but if you're in the hills of Tennessee, and there are all the stories being told to a kid, you'd be in the house at night, and the wind was blowing, and it would blow through their house because there was holes in the wall, and it'd whistle and make noise, and they'd tell you that there were wildcats out there that ate children and all these stories, and sometimes the wildcats stuck their fingers through the holes, and you'd chop their feet.

That's all the kind of stories they told these dumb little kids. And God took Vernon and the guy, he and those kids, and he started blessing them. And Vernon became a very faithful servant of God, and then Vernon became kind of a wealthy guy driving trucks.

[22 : 18] And then he had a truck firm, and then the last I heard he wasn't really serving God anymore. You know, he got over his own alcoholism. That's Vernon's story. What's your story? I brought myself up my own bootstraps. I changed my life. When we are blessed, in the very beginning, we kind of know we're being blessed.

But when we've been enjoying the blessings a while, it's pretty easy to forget that we're being blessed, and we think we're getting what we deserve. I work hard, and I deserve this. I know you don't believe that. None of you would even think like that.

But apparently Vernon did, and apparently plenty of others have, and that's going to lead to a strong downfall. 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 16. Pride has slowly grown. Now it's choking his spiritual life.

In 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 16, the Bible says, but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. Look at that verse. Wow. That's a hard verse. The guy who was 16, begging God and listening to his spiritual instructor, has slowly grown.

By the way, he's got a farming industry going like you wouldn't believe. He's digging ditches, building walls, claiming cities, building armies. This guy is a great king. I have no idea how long he was a great king. But as he got more and more lifted up, as he got more and more prosperous by the blessings of God, brought him to a place in his life where this story is fixing to take a major turn.

[23 : 26] I would tell you that poor people often worship better than rich people, because poor people are like, I don't know where it's coming from. I've got to get a hold of God. I wake up in the morning. I never wonder where I'm going to get anything to eat. I just wonder if I'm going to get what I want to eat.

I don't even think about that, really. I'm just going to go get what I want to eat. I'm rich. I live in America. There's people living in some of these countries in the world that wake up in the morning and wonder if they'll feed their kids. Those kind of people often seek the Lord better. See, God's blessings had made him proud, and the pride is what's going to bring about his destruction.

He had decided that God had so blessed him in one area that he could now step outside of that area into an area where he wasn't an expert. So in the story, look at the verse we read in 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 16. When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, and he transgressed against the Lord his God and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

So what happened was he was a king, and he listened to the man of God, and God helped him and grew him. And as God was growing him and prospering him, he got so big one day. And sometimes when we get uber successful or blessed, and we would never admit we're blessed because most of the time we don't count our blessings.

Most of the time we count our neighbor's blessings and feel like we don't have very many blessings. But we somewhere along the way begin to think we've kind of arrived. We've kind of made it. We're driving a car we want. We're wearing the clothes we want. We're eating the food we want.

[24 : 36] Life is going pretty good for us. And all of a sudden, we stop thinking about God brought me here. And so this guy decided, I'm going to step into what God doesn't want me to do. He's an expert in kingship, but he's not a priest.

That's not what God wanted him to do. And he decided to go into the temple and lead worship. Everybody ought to know who he is. This is the guy God made rich. This is the guy God made famous. This is the guy that God lifted up. God's blessed his leadership.

And so maybe they ought to realize that. He's got a lot of accomplishments, but now he needs more. I mean, now everybody's talking about, but what if he could be a great priest? What if he could lead worship? What if he could step into an arena where he wasn't great and prove how great he was?

I don't know if that's what's going on. Look at 2 Chronicles 26, 18. Just making sure it's the right verse. And they withstood Ushiah the king and said, It's not up to you, Ushiah, to burn incense, Lord, the priest of the sons of Zarin.

They are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary. You have trespassed. Neither shall it be for thine honor from the Lord God. That last part is what makes me think he thought it would be another thing to add to my resume.

[25 : 33] Great king, great farmer, great this, great that, and great this. Look at my, go read 2 Chronicles 26. Great everything. Now I'm going to be a great preacher. That's not a point here, by the way. The point is the guy has forgotten who brought him this far.

And he stepped into places where he shouldn't. And they said, You're not supposed to be here, buddy. You may be a king. You may rule the country, but God rules. And he said he wanted the sons of Aaron to do this. You don't belong in here.

And they said, And this is going to mess you up. You're doing this so you'll get another honor to your name, but you're not going to get honor. You're going to get dishonor. He was warned that he wouldn't get honor. I kind of wonder right here if the king and his pride, when he walked into the back of the place to make the sacrifices and the offerings, and the priest said, No, sir, you're not allowed here, and you know you're not.

What if he had just said, You're right. I overstepped my bounds. I'm sorry. I'll back away. But he didn't. He pushed on and said, I'm going in. And it angered him that anyone would tell him no. Look at 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 18.

19. Thank you. And they withstood Usai the king and said, It appertaineth not unto thee, Usai, to burn incense to the Lord. The priests are going to do it. And then the next verse said, Usai was wroth, angry, mad.

[26 : 38] He had the censer in his hand to burn incense. And he was mad at the priest. He was going to just storm in there and do what he wanted to do. God struck him with leprosy in the forehead before the priests. And the priests were like, Not just us doing the talking.

Now God's telling the boy to get out of here. Verse 20. And Azariah, the chief priest, all the priests looked upon him. And he was leprous in the forehead. And they thrust him out. And he himself even hastened to go out because the Lord had smote.

Do you realize that blessings can become burdens? Do you ever wonder why God made us rich? I mean, we are rich. I want you to just go ahead and admit it. I don't think anybody in this room is living on \$300 a year. I don't believe anybody in this room is living on \$500 a year.

I don't believe anybody in this room is living on those. Most of us don't even know what minimum wage is unless we're a student. Maybe it's what we pay the guy that works for us. And sometimes we kind of think these blessings are for us. And that's what happened here. He began to think he deserved them, that he earned them.

We think too highly of ourselves. We stop respecting or preferring our brothers like it tells us in the New Testament. And we insert ourselves into places he can honor to our own destruction. Well, it's time to quit. So go to 2 Chronicles 26.

[27 : 35] 2 Kings, you can go to any of these. Obedience brought blessings. Blessings brought pride. Pride brought destruction to a long life of men. I wish God had been just a tad more specific and told us, was he 50 years in, 45 years in?

How far into the ministry was he when this happened? We know he was 16 and we know he reigned 52 years. So that put him, what, at 68 years old when it's all over for him. But in 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 17, 80 priests have stood against him and said, You can't do this.

You're out of place. You've overstepped your bounds. You're too big for your britches. Back down. Back away. Don't do it. And this man, we should read 2 Chronicles 26. Just look at what he had. Great kid. He started so well.

He did so much. And now, no prestige. Now he can't live in the palace. Go to 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 21. And Usaiah the king was a leper until the day of his death. And he dwelt in a several house, a separate house.

You know, they had a bunch of houses. There's a palace and there's maids' quarters. Servants' quarters over there. And now the king can't stay in his own palace. Can't stay with his own family. This guy who had gone from nothing to somebody has lost all that.

[28 : 35] He was a leper. And his son takes over and leads the country. In other words, he did so good for so long. But as he took the blessings, he didn't realize it was God blessing him. I think he did realize in the beginning.

But slowly we forget him. I can remember when I surrendered to be a missionary, it was 1985. And David was going to be born in November of 1985. And so we were young kids. And I was calling the churches for the first time.

And no one was teaching me what to do. And I just, I was in, I'd resigned the church. I was in my office in the church. And I'd given them a month before I would leave. And I'm making phone calls. And I called Dr. William Hayes, who was a pastor down in Jonesboro area.

He's dead in heaven now. But I called Brother Hayes. And I just, I don't know him at all. I'm just calling through a list of people. And he answered the phone. And I said, hello, this is Austin Gardner. I'm a church plant missionary to Peru. And I was wondering if I might come by and present my ministry to you and your church.

He said, sure, why not? Why don't you come this week? I'm like, do what? He said, yeah, come on. I said, well, I hadn't resigned yet. He said, well, I ain't asking. Come on Sunday. Why don't you come on Tuesday night? We're in our missions conference. You can come in. We'll let you present your work, give you a little love off. I said, that's a great deal.

[29 : 30] So I drove down to his church and went in. And they gave me 10 minutes. I took my 10 minutes. They gave me \$50. I mean, I was only making \$200 a week as a pastor. Church wouldn't really take \$220. They weren't really taking very good care of me.

And \$50 one night for 10 minutes, I was like, Lord, this is a racket, brother. This is a good deal. I like this. I preached \$50. I'm doing good. I was so thankful that God had opened the door.

And that guy let me go. And he took me over sports, sported me, until he later became a missionary. Years go by. I got some fame. I got to being known as the missionary in Peru that had all that work going on. And the president of the board called me.

And he said, man, Austin, you know you are the stuff. And so I'd like you to come speak to my church. Sure, I'd work that into my schedule. I'll be up there to preach to you. And when he asked me to come, it's the president of the board. It's a big church. I mean, I'm like, there ought to be some jack in that.

But there ought to be a good love off. Now, you shouldn't think like that. But once you've been, you started out hungry for the 50, and all of a sudden, you get used to being the preacher and thinking people are taking good care of you. And I went and I preached for him. And later, they gave me a check. Like, see, \$75 or \$125.

[30 : 26] It said honorarium. And I said, no honor, just a lot of horarium in that. Boy, I was mad. You say, well, that's wicked. Why are you so wicked? Because I am. I'm wicked. I was like, if he ever calls me and asks me to speak again, I'm telling him, no, I'm busy.

Because, you know, what happens, you start out hungry and humble, and you end up proud and arrogant. Of course, I know y'all don't do that. I mean, but I do. So now you know that I do. He blew it. It's over for this guy. Now they're going to bury him. 2 Chronicles 26, verse 23.

So Si slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial, which belonged to the king. They said he's a leper. And Jotham, his son, reigned in his stead. Now the way this is worded is he didn't really get a king's burial.

He got buried in the king's graveyard, but he didn't get all the honors that go with the king of his status. They should have had all kinds of stuff going on. But by the end of it, the story is, well, they buried him in the field with the king. Ta-da.

It's done. It's over. How easy. Pride grows and chokes and then destroys. Humbly, we start out seeking the Lord. Slowly, God begins to bless and prosper us. Then we take for granted God's work.

[31 : 24] Then we get lifted up, and our fall is imminent. Is this story God's calling for us to consider that the same thing might happen to us? Could it be that you started out a long time ago like I started out a long time ago, scared to death?

I just wanted God to eat. Money didn't mean a thing to me. I would have gone anywhere. And by the time I'm preaching for the president of the commission, I was fully expecting \$1,500, not \$75. I was expecting honorary. You ever been there?

Kind of forget God brought you to where you are? And slowly, you know, now business is too important to have devotion. Family's too important to be faithful to church. And I don't need to go any further. You see, before we were like, man, I need God. Now we're like, eh, he's all right.

He's with me. Pride for the strength. Father in heaven, I love you. And I thank you for your people. And I pray, God, that you would help us tonight to be very careful to know how desperately we need. And I'll give you praise.