



Amaziah and Uzziah: The Poison of Pride

Lesson 15

Wherefore let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.

1 Corinthians 10:12

One of the saddest things to see is people go from humble to successful to proud to ruined. It's a process that has happened over and over again and will continue happening until Christ returns. Sometimes it seems that half of the movie plots and novels in the world are: 1) hero is underdog, 2) hero achieves success and becomes a jerk, 3) hero is humbled and realizes their pride was ruining them. ***Sadly, success often leads to arrogance, and arrogance will lead to destruction.*** We see this sad story played out dozens of times in Scripture, in many cases in the Kings of Israel. Sadly, the two kings we are studying today are both prime examples of this.

Amaziah and Uzziah were two southern (Judahite) kings who both trusted God and followed him, finding great success. Sadly, for both of them this led to ego and pride, and both of them made foolish decisions that led to their destruction, in different ways. These sobering stories paint for us in vivid brushstrokes the truth that we see affirmed again and again throughout Scripture: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25)

Amaziah was the son of Joash, the king who started well and ended up tripping before he got to the finish line. Sadly, that pattern was repeated with Amaziah and with his son Uzziah. In both of men's lives, we are going to see great success that leads to pride, which ultimately leads to destruction.

I. Summary of Amaziah (25:1-4)

The call of God to his people was to love him with all of their heart, soul, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). But there are many people who try to love God with part of their heart, soul, and strength. As we see in this lesson, that normally ends in disaster.

What does whole-hearted commitment to God look like?

Where else does God call for whole-hearted commitment?

Why is whole-hearted commitment to God important?

What happens if we aren't whole-heartedly invested in God?

II. Amaziah's initial success (25:5-13)

We're not told why, but when Amaziah came to the throne there was an immediate need to go to war. Amaziah makes careful preparation and then responds incredibly well when God messes with his careful plans.

A. Amaziah builds an army (25:5-6)

Amaziah rallies the troops in order to carry out his plan. In doing so he pays a hefty sum of money to recruit a large unit of Israelite mercenaries to join his campaign.

B. Amaziah listens to a prophet (25:7-10)

Right as he's about to set off for battle, though, a prophet comes and gives him a tough pill to swallow. God won't bless the venture if the Israelite soldiers are present. Amaziah asks a reasonable question: "But what about all this money I just spent hiring them?" The prophet reminds Amaziah that God is able to replace much more than he Amaziah spent if he will be faithful to God. In a step of faith, Amaziah does just that! He listens to the prophet and lets the men go home.

C. Amaziah's success (25:11-12)

Amaziah's war ends up being a strong success. God gives victory to Judah and they are able to soundly defeat the men of Seir (the mountain where the Edomites lived). In this story, however, the passage does mention the violence of Judah to massacre 10,000 prisoners of war, a note of unusual violence that might perhaps hint that something in this story is a little off. The passage also is silent on the question of why the war was fought in the first place. Judah seems to be the aggressor, and no justification for this battle is given.

D. Amaziah's problem (2:13)

The story picks up a loose thread that was left hanging from verse 10. When the Israelite troops were sent back, we were told they were mad. Now we find out what an angry army heading back home without a fight does: it finds somewhere else to fight. Even though these soldiers were paid for their trouble, their thirst for violence and the spoils of war led them to attack Judean

cities on their way back, killing 3,000 people and looting along the way.

This situation led to a real problem that Amaziah needed to address. How should he have gone about handling the problem?

III. Amaziah's pride (25:14-20)

Amaziah's story starts off with a lot of promise. He makes a hard decision because God tells him to and God blesses his obedience. Sadly, Amaziah's story goes down quickly immediately after this victory.

A. Amaziah worships false gods (25:14).

Amaziah does the unthinkable. After conquering the Edomites, he brings their pagan idols back and worships them.

Why would Amaziah do this? What motivation could he possibly have?

Is there any kind of a parallel that could be drawn between what Amaziah is doing here and believers today?

B. Amaziah ignores God's warning (25:15-16).

God sends a prophet to confront Amaziah. Essentially, Amaziah warns the prophet to keep quiet if he didn't want to die.

Why would Amaziah listen to the first prophet but ignore the second one?

The prophet stops warning Amaziah, but not before predicting that the king's arrogance will be his downfall.

Compare 25:16 with 25:8. What theme do we find in the warnings of both prophets?

C. Amaziah starts a foolish war with Israel (25:17-20).

We now come back to the problem of 25:13. What will Amaziah do about those Israelite troops that went pillaging their way back home? Well, his solution is to threaten the king of Israel. A little bit of back and forth taunting takes place between Amaziah and Joash (remember the guy who was supposed to bang the arrows on the ground?) in which Joash essentially warns Amaziah "Don't mess with me. I'm out of your league." While this might sound like an arrogant assessment, and while it might have been, it was nonetheless true. Israel was a lot bigger and stronger than Judah. But Amaziah, drunk with success from his campaign against the much smaller nation of Edom, decided to take on Israel anyway.

Why would Amaziah have recognized the need for God's blessing in the first war, but not the second?

What does worshipping the gods of Edom show about Amaziah's spiritual state? How might their worship contribute to this catastrophe?

How might we as believers fall into a similar trap as Amaziah did here, even if we don't bow down to literal idols?

IV. Amaziah's destruction (25:21-28)

The battle did not go well. Amaziah was humiliated, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the king was captured by Joash. Amaziah's life was eventually ended by assassination, it would seem in part because he stopped following the Lord and disaster came. Amaziah's end comes as he flees from the capital for his life, but can't run fast enough.

It's a sad end to a man who started off so well. Amaziah began by taking a chance on obeying God, but when God brought success Amaziah became overconfident and ignored God. His success led to pride, and his pride led to his fall.

Uzziah [Azariah] (2 Chronicles 26)

Uzziah (also called Azariah in the book of Kings) made similar foolish choices as did his father. In fact, there are many parallels in the way that their stories played out.

I. Summary of Uzziah (26:1-5)

We are told that Uzziah had an incredibly long reign of fifty-two years. During his father's reign, enough people had lost trust in their king that they made his sixteen-year-old son a co-ruler with him. Scripture approves of his reign overall as being that of a good king. Yet once again, we find a careful qualification, "as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."

II. Uzziah's initial success (26:6-15)

Once again, our story begins with a successful king. We read of political and military victories (26:6-9), successful building projects (26:10), and built a strong army (26:11-15), an impressive feat after his father's failed campaign against Israel.

III. Uzziah's pride (26:16-19a)

Sadly, after these various successes, we see once again a king become drunk with success and proudly rebel against God.

Read 26:16-19a. In what ways does Uzziah's rebellion look like that of his father? In what ways was it different?

Why would Uzziah even do this in the first place? What did he hope to gain?

Uzziah was resisted by the priests who stood up to the king. Doing so was no doubt a scary situation, but was the right thing to do. Uzziah reacted to the confrontation of God's messengers with anger, but he did so to his own destruction.

IV. Uzziah's destruction (26:19b-23)

God strikes Uzziah with leprosy on the spot. The king quickly leaves, but it's too late. The damage is done. King Uzziah must live in isolation and dies as a leper. God had been known to miraculously give people leprosy before (e.g. Miriam), and to miraculously cure people (e.g. Miriam,

Naaman), but he chooses not to heal Uzziah. Uzziah literally lives with the result of his sin for the rest of his life.

What warnings can we take away from this story? How should we think about pride and judgment?

Both Amaziah and Uzziah had strong starts. Sadly, they both became proud and it cost both of them dearly. We should pay careful attention to their example. Both the Old and the New Testament warn that pride leads to destruction, because God resists the proud. Whether we have material success or spiritual success, we must be always on the watch that our success does not turn our hearts to ourselves and our accomplishments, but rather that it keeps us focused on God.

How might Amaziah and Uzziah avoided their fates? How do we avoid the dangers of pride that we see in this lesson?

Coming Up

Next week we will consider the final kings of Israel. We will study 2 Kings 15-17, and look at the last six kings who reigned (many for just a very short period of time). The nation will go from one of the strongest points in their history under Jeroboam II to non-existent in about 30 years. It can be easy to look around and think we are getting away with sin, not knowing that the consequences of our choices can suddenly show up any minute.

In the lessons that follow we will see what this time period looked like from the perspective of Judah, particularly between the wicked king Ahaz and a certain prophet who received his call in the year that king Uzziah died (cf Isaiah 6:1).