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“I Saw the Lord...” (Isaiah 6)

Study 2
Lessons for Leaders
from Uzziah
(2 Chronicles 26)

All of us seem to have a “besetting sin”. We have some sinful thought, attitude, action, or temptation to which are particularly prone and with which we struggle on a regular basis.

Those who serve in the world of government and politics certainly have a “besetting sin”. That is pride and self-confidence. An individual candidate or party may win elections. Office holders may rise in positions of influence and leadership. Legislators, lobbyists, and organizations may get their bills passed. Voting blocks or movements may see their candidates win. In all this activity, it is easy to say, “Look what I accomplished”, or “see what we made happen”. We tend to forget that it is God who has given us our very lives and Who has blessed us to live in a country with our form of government. We fail to realize we are ultimately dependent upon God for EVERYTHING we might accomplish or achieve.

We pause in our study of the prophet’s vision in Isaiah 6 to consider the life of King Uzziah of Judah. His life and death gives a warning lesson to each of us when we are tempted to become proud and self-confident and forget we depend upon God alone in our lives and service.

“In the year King Uzziah died...” In our study of Isaiah 6 and the marvelous vision and call the prophet received, this is simply a passing statement to note the time frame of Isaiah’s experience. However, when we consider the career of Uzziah, and the way he died, it will be helpful for us to consider this King of Judah before we go on to study Isaiah’s vision.

The Warning of Uzziah’s Life

In 2 Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 26 we find the story of King Uzziah. 2 Chronicles gives the fullest account of his life and death. We see he began as a great king:

4 He did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 5 He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him. (2 Chronicles 26:4-5)

Uzziah sought to do right and please God. He had a godly counselor, Zechariah (mentioned only here) who influenced him significantly. The key statement is, ***“As long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him”***.

In verses 6-15 we read of Uzziah’s great successes. He gained victories over his enemies and built cities in those conquered territories. He strengthened and fortified the city of Jerusalem. He promoted tremendous agricultural development. He built up a great military with the best and latest weapons and technology. We see that his fame was extended and spread afar (vs. 8, 15).

At the end of verse 15, we find the hinge of Uzziah’s story, ***“...His fame spread afar, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong”***. Here we see Uzziah’s life take a tragic turn:

16 But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

In his pride, arrogance, and self-confidence Uzziah decided go into the temple and do that which God specifically reserved for the priest – to burn incense upon the alter. The priests confronted Uzziah, reminding him it was only for the priests to lead the worship of God by offering up incense. They warned him, ***“...Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God.”*** Perhaps had Uzziah repented at that point, the story may have ended differently. However, we read, ***“...Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense”***. Uzziah had leprosy. This was a disease about which both the culture of the time and God’s Word had strict guidelines. He had to live in a separate house. He was no longer able to go the temple to worship God. He lost his kingdom as his son Jotham took over the throne. Despite all his greatness and accomplishments this is how Uzziah is remembered – ***“He is a leper”*** (vs. 23).

The Lessons of Uzziah's Life

As long as Uzziah sought the Lord, he was marvelously helped by God. When he became strong, He became proud. He forgot God who helped and blessed him. Let his life be a lesson to us to constantly remember God and all He has done for us.

We Should Remember the King of Kings, Jesus Christ

The greatest of Israel and Judah's kings like David or Uzziah were at best sinful men who failed greatly. Our own political system has flaws and is led by flawed, sinful people. This causes us to long for the day when the world will be ruled in true righteousness and justice by the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. Christ would come as one who **COULD** rightly serve as both King and Priest. Though He is King, He offered Himself up as the sacrifice for our sin. Even now He serves as our High priest, pleading forgiveness for our sin and interceding before the Father on our behalf. (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25)

We should remember Christ's own example. Though He was God, He humbled Himself and became obedient and dependent upon the Father:

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil. 2:5-8)

We should remember how God often works in ways to demonstrate His strength and power.

People of Israel in the Promised Land – As the people of Israel were preparing to enter the Promised Land, God said to them:

“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; ¹² otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, ¹³ and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...

¹⁶ In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. ¹⁷ Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ But you shall remember

the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth... (Deut. 8:11-18)

Gideon – In Judges 7 as Gideon prepared to fight Midian and God was reducing his army to a mere 300 men, God said to Gideon, *“The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’”* With only 300 against an army of thousands, God gave Israel the victory.

Apostle Paul – Paul had some besetting problem or illness given to him to keep him humble. He prayed three times for God to take it from Him. God responded, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.”* This led Paul to say, *“Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong”. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)*

We should remember God's grace in our salvation.

This will always lead us to humility and dependence upon Him.

⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior... (Titus 3:4-6)

We should remember we need good friends who can counsel us, give us advice, and keep us accountable.

Uzziah continued to seek God while he had Zechariah. He failed to heed the warnings of the priests. For us these kinds of relationships are best found in a local church where we hear God's Word and have brothers and sisters to encourage us and hold us accountable.

Conclusion

In the world of government and politics, our “besetting sin” may indeed be pride and self-confidence. Let Uzziah's life (and death) be a reminder to us it is God who has blessed us. It is God upon whom we constantly depend. Let Uzziah's failure be a reminder to us to seek to “finish well” and keep our eyes on God as we serve, work, and strive in the capitol.

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays

8:00 House Government Org Conference Room (East Wing)
12:00 Noon Treasurer's Conference Room (EB54,
Basement of East Wing)