

# "UZZIAH" : AN EPITAPH TO PRIDE

2 Chronicles 26 (2 Kings 15)

## Introduction:

1. Tell me what these three men have in common? Richard Nixon, Elvis Presley, and Pete Rose.
  - a. Oh, you might think of some ties that they had, but if you thought about it long, you would come to the conclusion those were men who had distinguished careers in their fields of expertise and talents, and yet whose careers and memories were flawed by glaring mistakes that were brought to light near the end of their time in the spotlight.
  - b. Mistakes that were so glaring and that were so impressionable for the average person that their careers are forever flawed with that memory.
2. Well, today's story line is about an Old Testament character whose career suffered the same kind of thing. I want you to take your Bibles and turn to II Chronicles, Chapter 26.
  - a. We're going to look at the story of Uzziah. Uzziah's story is also recorded in II Kings, Chapter 15.
    - i. We won't get a chance to look at that account just for the sake of time.
    - ii. And there by the way he's listed under another name, perhaps a surname and yet we know it's the same man because he took the throne at the same age, reigned for the same number of years and had the same father.
  - b. Now let's find out a little about this man. Look at Chapter 26, verse 1 and read with me.
3. ***“Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was 16 years old, and made him king in place of his father, Amaziah.”***
  - a. And by the way that's a fascinating thing isn't it? His father Amaziah, incidentally had been murdered.
  - b. And yet all the people had enough confidence in this 16 year old boy that the people of Judah took and unanimously practically acclaimed him as king.
  - c. By the way, I just got to say something to our young people.
    - i. Don't you ever think because you're young God can't use you to do something great.
    - ii. Uzziah was 16 years old when God allowed him to take the throne over all the peoples of Judah. Don't think you've got to wait until you're in your thirties or your forties for God to do something great with you.
    - iii. Oh yes, he'll have something responsible for you to do then, but God can use you no matter what your age. Be open to that.
4. Well he took the throne at age 16. Now notice beginning in verse 3.
  - a. ***“Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king and he reigned in Jerusalem 52 years.”***

- i. That by the way is the second longest reign of any of the kings of Judah in their history.
  - b. ***“His mother's name was Jecoliah and she was from Jerusalem.”***
    - i. She must have been a good god-fearing mother – probably why she is mentioned by the author.
    - ii. She wasn't the daughter of some foreign king who would be following after idolatry, but a decent god-fearing woman of Judah. She must have helped in bringing up Uzziah in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
  - c. Can you imagine a 16 year old taking the throne, ruling over a few million people and to do that now for 52 years until he's 68 years old.
    - i. You say, well how well did he do? Well let's see.
    - ii. But you know before we even keep reading, you'd suspect he did pretty well, wouldn't you, why?...Because he reigned a long time.
    - iii. But he must have done pretty well and sure enough look with me beginning at **verse 4**.
- 5. We find out that number 1, he was spiritually dependable as a leader.
  - a. The Bible said [V. 4 ] ***“he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God during the days of Zechariah”.***
  - b. Zechariah was a prophet, by the way, who instructed him in the fear of God. The best thing you can say about Uzziah was this right here.
  - c. He sought after the Lord. He wanted to be God's man. And if you look at the rest of **verse 5**, there's a little axiom there that he followed that you and I ought never to forget.
  - d. The next line says, ***“As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.”***
- 6. And by the way if you've not already done that, would you underline that in your Bible right now? **Chapter 26, verse 5**, underline that last statement: ***“As long as he sought the Lord, the Lord gave him success.”***
  - a. Let me tell you something, that promise is true for you too. You say wait a minute, I seek the Lord, I don't have money. Who said anything about money? Who said anything about you being king?
  - b. The principle says, as long as you seek the Lord, the Lord will give you success. If you don't understand it, maybe you just need to redefine your view of success, but I will promise you as long as you seek the Lord your life will turn out being what it ought to be.
  - c. And folks that's the definition of success. When my life gets out of this old world everything it's supposed to get, that's success. And as long as you seek the Lord like Uzziah, you will find success. So he was spiritually dependent on God.
- 7. Now because of that, look at what God did for him. He became a great military conqueror.

- a. Look at **verse 6**, he went to war against the Philistines, those were the fiercest people of his day and when he broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, he conquered their most powerful cities and broke down their walls.
  - b. The Bible goes on to say that in **verse 8** the Ammonites even brought him tribute. And his fame spread all the way down to the Egyptians.
  - c. They heard about this man Uzziah. And one of the reasons he became so powerful an avenger is because he developed a strong interior army.
8. Look at **verse 9**, from chapter 26. "*Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them.*"
- a. Drop down to **verse 13** and we read that he developed an army of three hundred and seven thousand, five hundred men, maybe the largest army that Israel had ever known.
  - b. And not just a large army, but a well-equipped army, the Bible then says "*Uzziah provided shields, spears, helmets, coats of armor, bows and sling stongs for the entire army.*" Those were instruments they weren't used to carrying into battle. He was a great military leader.
9. Look at **verse 15** it's a summary statement of his military defense. "*In Jerusalem he made machines designed by skillful men for use on the towers and on the corner defenses to shoot arrows and hurl large stones.*" Must have been something like catapults.
- a. "*His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.*"
  - b. This man was a great king. His fame was everywhere.
  - c. And by the way, **verse 10**, if you look over at it, says he was also an agricultural and architectural genius. He built these great cisterns, he watered the land, he produced tremendous numbers of crops, his people didn't go hungry.
  - d. You know you read all that and you say, Man, this fellow had something, and by the way he was powerful for a number of years. He was without a doubt, one of the finest kings Judah had ever had.
  - e. Then **Verse 16**, a new paragraph, begins, "*But . . .*"
    - i. You knew that was coming, there always seems to be a "but".
    - ii. And the but in Uzziah's story occurs in **verse 16**. Look at it with me.
10. "*But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall.*"
- a. Folks, the story of Uzziah is a story about pride. And since it's a story about pride, it's a story about everyone of us.
  - b. I want you to see the way pride happened upon this man and what it did to him. We're going to see briefly the **Seven Steps** in the sin of pride – and then the concluding lessons for us to remember.
1. **Number one**, don't every forget that pride begins with accomplishment, whether

- perceived or real. You see that was the deal in Uzziah's case.
- a. God had led him to all this success, to all this accomplishment, but whenever you begin to succeed in life, whatever accolades begin to come your way, and people take notice of you, it's inevitable the devil will seek to make you proud of that blessing, even though the blessing didn't originate in you.
  - b. And if that pride takes root, it will crumble the success that you've sought for, for so long.
  - c. You've asked God for it, God's given you that success, your life has been built up, but you can be sure the temptations of pride will come in on its heels.
2. **Step two**, when it comes in on the heels of success, pride will take root when you forget where your success came from. You see that's the key.
- a. It takes root when you forget where your success came from. Look back at **verse 5**, those last few words I had you repeat, *"As long as he sought the Lord, the God gave him success."*
  - b. You see, that's where it came from. Look at **verse 15**. Look at the last line in **verse 15**: *"His fame spread far and wide" look at the next line, "for he was greatly helped..."*
    - i. Who greatly helped him?
    - ii. God greatly helped him until he became powerful. Folks that's what Uzziah's problem was. He forgot from whence his strength came.
  - c. Look at **verse 16** again because that's the key, *"But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall."* All right look with me now.
3. **Third step**, when pride comes about it will show itself first in your relationship with God.
- a. If your heart's being filled with pride, it won't first manifest itself to your friends, or to your employees, or to your employer, it won't even first show itself to your wife and children. The one who will first notice the pride in your heart, is God himself.
  - b. He will sense your pride long before anybody else does. God was sensing it as the Ammonites were giving tribute to Uzziah. God knew about Uzziah's pride, even when the Egyptians were bragging about him.
  - c. But look at **verse 16** again. *"After Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall."* But you know what happens after that?
4. **Step Four** – Pride will cause you to do things that's not right!
- a. When puffed up– you forget about the Word of the Lord and do things your own way.
  - b. Look with me beginning in **verse 16**, the middle part of the verse. *"...He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense."*
  - c. And by the way, Uzziah had no right to do that, Uzziah was not a priest. That was a responsibility that only the priest could undertake.

5. **Step Five:** Pride will cause confrontation.
- a. Look what happens, a brave priest dares to confront the king. **Verse 17 . . .**
    - i. *"Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the Lord followed him in. They confronted him and said, 'It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord God.'"*
  - b. Write this down, if pride begins to develop in your heart, some courageous godly person will confront you about your pride. Sooner or later, it will manifest itself.
6. But then the **Sixth Step**, when pride's confronted, it will be angry.
- a. **Verse 19**, *"Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry."* You see pride doesn't think anybody has the authority to confront it.
  - b. Pride thinks it has the ability and the authority to set all the rules.
7. Pride will become angry when confronted and then the **Seventh Step** in pride, there's the fall. Look beginning at **verse 19**,
- a. *"...While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the Lord had afflicted him."*
  - b. You see after that anger, there's going to be the fall. [ Prov. 16:18 "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. ]
    - i. The priest couldn't get him out of the temple, but God could and the same Lord who had helped him and who had prospered him, that same Lord smote him because Uzziah had gone too far.
8. And then finally there's the epitaph to PRIDE.
- a. Look down at **verse 23**. The last verse of the chapter. He died from that leprosy and the Bible says, *"Uzziah rested with his fathers and was buried near them in a field for burial that belonged to the kings, for people said, 'He had leprosy.' And Jotham his son succeeded him as king."*
  - b. I want you to notice that epitaph would you? What's said about him? Two things.
  - c. First– They wouldn't even bury him in the royal burial field...Why? because he was a man who died of leprosy. They buried him **near** the burial places of the kings, but they wouldn't contaminate the royal cemetery with a leper and all they said was, he's got to go here because he had leprosy.
    - i. Fifty-two years he had served as a king. Most all of which, he had been a good man and a great leader, but as he continued to prosper, his pride

began to grow to the point that it manifested itself and he was enraged and God struck him down and he was remembered only as a leper.

- d. Second – You see that's the final thing about pride, when your heart's full of it and you're struck down, people will remember you only for that pride and what it brought about, not for the good accomplished in your life prior to that.

### CONCLUSION:

What are the lessons for us? I want to give you three as we close in addition to the ones that we've kind of pointed out along the way.

1. **Number one**, let's realize from Uzziah's life that no genuine success is possible apart from the Lord God.
  - a. God prospered Uzziah, God helped him.
  - b. If you're enjoying success of any kind, it's a blessing from God, don't ever forget that.
2. **Second lesson** that we should surely learn from Uzziah, is that there are few tests like the test of success.
  - a. This might surprise some of you, but there are more people who can handle it at the bottom, than there are who can handle it at the top.
  - b. You see the pinnacle is a very tenuous place to be. And if you get there, if God blesses you with success in your life beyond your imagination, let me encourage you walk *humbly*, walk *quietly*, and walk *gratefully* in the presence of God.
3. And the **third lesson**, the God that blesses is also the God who can undo those blessings.
  - a. I said a moment ago, the same God that gave Uzziah riches and health, was the same one who looked at him in the temple, and said let there be leprosy and that's the way he died.
  - b. Don't ever spit in the face of God. Don't ever let pride swell in your heart to the point you think, you're the one who calls the shots. God has never tolerated that and He won't now.
4. Will you humble yourself before the Lord? Will you come – submitting yourself to His will for your life, and obey the gospel?