

**UZZIAH**  
Pride  
II Chronicles 26

I. A Drama in Two Acts.

King Uzziah (called Azariah in II Kings 15) is yet another **tragic hero** of the Old Testament. Coming to the throne at age 16, he reigned for 52 years (though for much of this time it was actually his son, Jotham, who reigned as co-regent since Uzziah was a leper). Uzziah's life is a graphic illustration of the danger that comes to those who have been **blessed** by God. His life can be studied in two acts.

A. Act I. The blessings of seeking the Lord. (II Chron. 26:1-15)

1) Uzziah's godly character (vv. 1-5)

*<sup>4</sup> And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. <sup>5</sup> 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. (II Chron. 26:4-5)*

a. He "set himself" to seek God.

Seeking God seems to be the defining characteristic of Uzziah's early years.

1. Seeking God defines a posture, an attitude, a **disposition of the heart** ... more than it does a certain set of behaviors.
2. Seeking God requires a **decision**. Uzziah "set himself" to seek God. This demanded a clear and decisive choice. It did not happen accidentally.
3. Seeking God pleases God and brings his **blessing**. Often in Scripture (especially in II Chronicles) a "seeking" heart is portrayed as a primary character trait that God desires.
  - *...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and **seek** my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (II Chron. 7:14)*
  - *And Rehoboam did evil, for he did not set his heart to **seek** the LORD. (II Chron. 12:14)*
  - *Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to **seek** the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. <sup>4</sup> And Judah assembled to **seek** help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to **seek** the LORD. (II Chron. 20:3-4)*
  - *The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who **seek** the LORD lack no good thing. (Psalm 34:10)*

- You will **seek** me and find me, when you **seek** me with all your heart. (Jer. 29:13)
- Ask, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (Matt. 7:7)
- None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one **seeks** for God. (Rom. 3:10)
- If then you have been raised with Christ, **seek** the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (Col. 3:1)
- And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who **seek** him. (Heb. 11:6)

b. He had a godly mentor.

*He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God... (II Chron. 26:5)*

Uzziah illustrates the importance of surrounding oneself with godly counsel (mentor, discipleship leader, spiritual director, accountability partners, godly friends, etc.). The benefits that come from godly relationships are tremendous. The dangers that come to those who do not maintain godly relationships are great.

The benefits of having godly relationships:	The dangers of not having godly relationships:

2) Blessings and prosperity (vv. 6-15).

<sup>6</sup> He went out and made war against the Philistines and broke through the wall of Gath and the wall of Jabneh and the wall of Ashdod, and he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. <sup>7</sup> God **helped him** against the Philistines and against the Arabians who lived in Gurbaal and against the Meunites. <sup>8</sup> The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong. <sup>9</sup> Moreover,

*Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the Angle, and fortified them. <sup>10</sup> And he built towers in the wilderness and cut out many cisterns, for he had large herds, both in the Shephelah and in the plain, and he had farmers and vinedressers in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil. <sup>11</sup> Moreover, Uzziah had an army of soldiers, fit for war, in divisions according to the numbers in the muster made by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders. <sup>12</sup> The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses of mighty men of valor was 2,600. <sup>13</sup> Under their command was an army of 307,500, who could make war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. <sup>14</sup> And Uzziah prepared for all the army shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and stones for slinging. <sup>15</sup> 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. (II Chron. 26:6-15)*

Look at the different ways God blessed Uzziah and the kingdom during these days when he had a heart to seek the Lord:

- a. **Military** strength.
- b. **Financial** strength.
- c. **Respect** and fame.
- d. **Building** programs.
- e. **Agricultural** abundance.

These blessings were not the result of favorable circumstances or wise government. They were the direct evidence of God's favor. Uzziah is a living illustration of the truth Jesus spoke in Matthew 6:33.

*But **seek first** the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

#### B. Act II. The dangers of spiritual blessings (II Chron. 26:16-23)

*<sup>16</sup> But when he was strong, he grew **proud** to his destruction. For he was **unfaithful** to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. <sup>17</sup> But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor, <sup>18</sup> and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." <sup>19</sup> Then Uzziah was **angry**. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. <sup>20</sup> And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out.*

because the LORD had struck him. <sup>21</sup> And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD. And Jotham his son was over the king's household, governing the people of the land. <sup>22</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz wrote. <sup>23</sup> And Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, "He is a leper." And Jotham his son reigned in his place. (II Chron. 26:16-23)

1) The cause of his sin.

*But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. (ESV)*

It would be wrong to say that Uzziah's tragic fall was caused by God's blessings. Rather, his fall was caused by a **wrong response** to God's blessings. The Bible has much to say about the desired effect of God's blessings. Far from making us proud, God prospers his people:

a. To **humble us**.

<sup>11</sup> Take care lest you forget the LORD your God... <sup>12</sup> lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, <sup>15</sup> who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, <sup>16</sup> who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might **humble you** and **test you**, to do you good in the end. <sup>17</sup> Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' <sup>18</sup> You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (Deut. 8:11-18)

b. To lead us to **repentance**.

*Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's **kindness** is meant to lead you to repentance? (Romans 2:4)*

c. To enable us to **be a blessing** to others.

- Now the LORD said to Abram, "...I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will **be a blessing**" (Genesis 12:1-2)
- May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, <sup>2</sup> **that** your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. (Psalm 67:1-2)

## 2) The nature of his sin.

*For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. (v. 16)*

The Old Testament indicates that God has his own understanding of the separation of church and state. The Levitical **priests** were to officiate in the Temple and the Davidic **kings** were to officiate in the palace. Furthermore, the **prophets** were periodically raised up by God's Spirit to speak truth to both kings and priests. No other nation had a system of checks and balances like Judah!

Uzziah's actions were a brazen affront to God's design. Blinded by his own success, he sought to fill the role of priest as well as king. He entered the Temple and he burned incense, two actions reserved exclusively for the priests. The depth of Uzziah's arrogant presumption is revealed when he is confronted by 80 priests. Rather than repent, he hardened in his rebellion.

*<sup>17</sup> But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor, <sup>18</sup> and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." <sup>19</sup> Then Uzziah was **angry**... (vv. 17-19)*

Rather than repent, when he was confronted, he became "angry." The Hebrew word refers to a stormy rage. He lost his temper. He was furious. Pride is perhaps most clearly revealed in the anger that bubbles to the surface whenever someone crosses **my will**.

## 3) The consequences of his sin.

*...and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the LORD had struck him. And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death... (vv. 19-21)*

God has **zero tolerance** for presumptuous pride. He has no patience for those who arrogantly assume roles in his service that are not theirs to perform. Those who defy his holy purposes will incur his wrath.

### TABLE TALK

1. Which situation do you consider to be more spiritually dangerous: affliction, suffering, pain.... or.... blessings, comfort, prosperity? Explain.
2. Describe someone who "seeks God." What is the difference between "seeking" God and "finding" him? Why does the Bible place such a high premium on seeking?
3. Our study mentions that the blessings of God are intended to produce three godly results in the lives of his people: humility, repentance and a channel of blessing to others. Is this what usually happens? Why or why not?
4. Why was God's judgment on Uzziah (leprosy) so severe? What should we learn from this?

## II. Pride: The Most Deadly Sin.

### A. The origin of pride.

Of all the sins, none is more clearly associated with Satan than pride. No other trait is more **demonic** than this. Medieval theologians put pride at the top of their list of "Seven Deadly Sins." Two passages are critical in helping us to understand that pride finds its origin in the heart of Satan.

#### 1) Ezekiel 28:12-17.

Though spoken against the "King of Tyre" this passage appears to go beyond the earthly realm and speaks about the fall of Satan.

*You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared.*

*You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed (or, banished) you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your **heart** was **proud** because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground... (Ezek. 28:12-17)*

Two things stand out in Satan's fall:

- a) All of his blessings were a gracious **gift** from the God who created him.
  - b) Something in his heart, however, caused him to draw the wrong conclusion from the blessings of God. The biblical word to describe this **heart attitude** is pride.
- 2) Isaiah 14:12-15.

*How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. (Isa. 14:12-15)*

In this passage, Satan's fall is attributed to three things:

- a) **Egotism.** *I... I... I... I... I...*
  - b) **Self-will.** *I will... I will... I will... I will... I will.*
  - c) **Presumption.** *I will make myself like the Most High....*
- B. The cause of pride.

Summarizing what we have seen both in the life of Uzziah and in the rest of Scripture, we begin to understand the cause of pride in the human heart.

- a) **Spiritual amnesia.**

We forget that God in his infinite grace has freely given blessings to undeserving people like us. Such amnesia causes us to begin to take personal credit for the good things in our lives rather than living in humble gratitude for God's mercy and grace.

- b) **Self-absorption.**

Life becomes all about me. Rather than worship God, I begin to worship at the altar of the unholy trinity of **Me**, **Myself** and **I**.

- c) Becoming **my own god.**

Proud people are those who have mounted a *coup d'etat*, deposing God from his rightful throne and assuming the reigns of power for themselves. They assume roles and functions that belong only to God.

d) **Self-will**

Long before sin becomes an action it manifests itself in the heart as an attitude of self-will. Life is all about control, getting my way... and woe to anyone who tries to stop me! The national anthem of the proud could be Frank Sinatra's song, *I Did It My Way*. John Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, captured the essence of pride in his depiction of Satan when he said, *Better to **reign in hell** than to serve in heaven!* Few pieces of literature show this attitude more brazenly than the poem of William Ernest Henley, *Invictus*.

*Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll.  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.*

## C. The consequences of pride.

The Bible is clear that no sin will send us more certainly to **hell** than pride. The consequences of pride are seen most clearly in the short verse that is repeated twice: *God opposes the proud...* (1 Pet. 5:5; James 4:6). Though God's wrath against pride may not always be as swift and manifest as it was with Uzziah, you can be sure that pride will inevitably lead to **destruction**.

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Prov. 16:18)*

## D. The cure for pride.

a) **Confess** the truth.

There are only two kinds of people: the proud, who think they are humble, and the humble, who know they are proud.

*If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think tell him the first step. The first step is to realize that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least,*

*nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed. (C. S. Lewis. Mere Christianity. p. 99)*

b) Know God.

It is impossible to know God and be proud at the same time! Therefore, anyone who claims to be Christian and yet is arrogant and proud can be "explained" in only one of two ways:

- 1) Either he is a liar and a hypocrite.
- 2) Or he is worshipping an imaginary god.

C. S. Lewis points out that once you really get to know God...

*... you will, in fact, be humble – delightedly humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all that silly nonsense about your own dignity which has made you restless and unhappy all your life. He is trying to make you humble in order to make this moment possible: trying to take off a lot of silly, ugly, fancy-dress in which we have all got ourselves up and are strutting about like the little idiots we are. I wish I had got a bit further with humility myself: if I had, I could probably tell you more about the relief, the comfort, of taking the fancy-dress off – getting rid of the false self, with all its "Look at me" and "Aren't I a good boy?" and all its posing and posturing. To get even near it, even for a moment, is like a drink of cold water to a man in a desert. (p. 99)*

c) Know yourself.

Pride creeps in when we forget our true identity and begin to think we are someone we aren't. Humility is the natural by-product of an accurate view of ourselves.

- We are created beings... not self-created.
- We are sinners.
- Everything good that we have is a gift.

Therefore:

*Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. (Romans 12:3)*

d) Remember God and his blessings.

Perhaps the most dramatic Biblical illustration of someone who forgot God and instead took personal credit for his achievements is King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

*<sup>29</sup> At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, <sup>30</sup> and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my*

majesty?"<sup>31</sup> While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you,<sup>32</sup> and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."<sup>33</sup> Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. (Daniel 4:29-33)

God's punishment on Nebuchadnezzar's pride had its desired effect and eventually the king gave glory to God. His sanity returned when he rediscovered his proper place in God's plan.

*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in **pride** he is able to humble. (Dan. 4:37)*

Paul summed up the matter nicely with two penetrating questions:

*What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you **boast** as if you did not receive it? (I Cor. 4:7)*

e) **Humble** yourself.

II Chronicles is full of examples of those who refused to humble themselves. The consequences were fatal every time!

- *Amon did not humble himself before the Lord... and incurred guilt more and more... (II Chron. 33:23)*
- *Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord. (II Chron. 36:12)*

Don't wait to be **humiliated**! Humble yourself! In the Bible this command is repeated in many ways and forms:

- *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (II Chron. 7:14)*
- *When Rehoboam humbled himself the wrath of the Lord turned from him... (II Chron. 12:12)*
- *And when Manasseh was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea... (II Chron. 33:12)*
- *Because you (Josiah) have humbled yourself before me... I also have heard you, declares the Lord. (II Chron. 34:27)*

- *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand... (1 Pet. 5:6)*
- *Humble yourselves before the Lord... (James 4:10)*

Seeing pride put in contrast to humility helps us to better understand what God desires.

**The Proud Person**

It's all about me.  
 Promotes self.  
 Gets angry when confronted.  
 Loves to talk.  
 Cocky about what they know.  
 Seeks to place blame.  
 Compares self to others.  
 "Lord, change them."  
 Covers up sin.  
 Concerned with image.

**The Humble Person**

It's all about God.. and others.  
 Promotes others.  
 Is responsive when confronted.  
 Loves to listen.  
 Humbled by what they don't know.  
 Seeks to take responsibility.  
 Compares self to God.  
 "Lord, change me."  
Confesses sin.  
 Concerned with truth.

**TABLE TALK**

1. Why is God so opposed to pride? What is so demonic, hellish and damnable about this particular sin?
2. Look again at the four causes of pride (pp. 7 & 8): spiritual amnesia, self-absorption, becoming my own god and self-will. With which of these traits do you struggle the most?
3. How do you recognize if someone is proud? What is he like? Describe the aroma of pride.
4. How do you recognize if someone is humble? What is he like? Describe the aroma of humility.
5. How does one go about obeying the biblical command to humble oneself? Discuss this together and write down some specific things one can do. I can obey God and humble myself by:

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