

Uzziah's Pride: Famous King to Excluded Leper

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Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 26. We're going to read the whole chapter starting in verse 1. "And all the people of Judah took Uzziah who was 16 years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. He built Eloth and restored it to Judah, after the king slept with his fathers. Uzziah was 16 years old when he began to reign. And he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 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. 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. God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians who lived in Gurbaal and against the Meunites. The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt. For he became very strong. Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the Angle, and fortified them. And he built towers in the wilderness and cut out many cisterns, for he had large herds, both in Shephelah and the plain, and he had farmers and vinedressers in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.

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. The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses of mighty men of valor was 2,600. Under their command was an army of 307,500, who could make war with mighty power to help the king against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for all the army shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows and stones for slinging. In Jerusalem he made machines, 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. But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

But Azariah the priest went in after him with 80 priests of the Lord, who were men of valor, 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.' 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 priest 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, 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. Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from the first to the last, Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz wrote. 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."

Well, that's an interesting biography, isn't it. It starts out very positive. Even a young guy in his youth, put in the place of king, and he set his face to seek God, and God prospered him. It's a really encouraging biography in the beginning. But he got taken out by pride. And the ending of his biography is very sad. He went from being a famous king - his fame all the way to Egypt - to being a leper who was excluded. He was a man who couldn't take criticism and rebuke in those latter years. And look what it cost him.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your faithfulness to us. Lord, You have marvelously helped us to this day. Lord, You have kept us. You have been so gracious to us. You began a good work in us. We trust You'll bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray You'd help right now. Come, Lord, give us reality. Help us to learn from this man's mistakes and even from the things he did right. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So how were Uzziah's early days? How did he get to this point of pride? And as v. 16 says, he was unfaithful to the Lord. Here he was being faithful. Then, he's unfaithful. Here he was the king. Here he's a leper excluded. How does that happen? It matters to you. It matters to me this morning, lest the same things that got him get us. We find here he reigned as a king at 16. Sixteen years old. Previously, his own father Amaziah had sinned and sought the false gods. And Amaziah refused counsel and went to war against counsel. And at war, he was taken captured. So that was Uzziah's father. You think when your father has certain faults, you'd learn from it to some degree. You'd take some of those things to heart, we would hope.

Uzziah, we find in these first verses of 2 Chronicles 26 - verse 5 says he set himself to seek God. We have everything to believe this man was a man of prayer. He sought God. And it even says, "as long as he sought the Lord, the Lord God made him prosper." We find here he was instructed in the days of Zechariah - whether Zechariah was alive at that point - the fact is he was instructed in the fear of God in those days. He was sitting under solid teaching. He's not in a shallow church. He's under the truth. He's being exposed to truth.

What does it mean to fear God? "...Instructed him in the fear of God." If you fear God, you don't take lightly His Word, right? You read something in the Word, and you realize, God forbid I go against that. God forbid if this position is not for me, or offering incense is not for me. God forbid I go and do that. If it's not for me, I'm not going to do it. That's part of what the fear of God produces. It produces a fear of going and offending the Lord. You take serious His Word. Uzziah was being instructed with that mindset.

Yet, we saw his latter years. He obviously didn't have that mindset then. Something happened. His solid instruction led him to be a man of prayer. And God prospered him. Verse 8 says, "The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah and his fame spread even to the borders of Egypt." That's a decent distance away. Everyone knew his name. He had done such things and he had had victories that people knew who this man was. You know, he went from someone who was just the child of a king, to becoming king, and then being made well known. Being famous as it says. "His fame spread." We think about Uzziah - he was an innovative person. We saw that in

v. 15. "In Jerusalem, he made machines, invented by skillful men to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and great stones."

You can just imagine that. It looks complicated in my mind. Some type of trebuchet or something. A catapult. And his fame spread far because he was marvelously helped till he was strong. In the same way he made machines, the Lord raises up Christian leaders in our day. They do things that are very innovative. They do things to reach numbers of people. They have an impact on this generation. Their name becomes known. People used to not know who they were. Now people know their name. And it's a good thing. And they did it by being marvelously helped by the Lord. You see the progress was not something done by the arm of the flesh, it was by the power of God helping this man, who was a man who feared God and sought God. And he set himself to seek God.

Yet, in the midst of all this happening - the growth, the victories, the inventions, the fame spreading - what's the big question that's being asked? What's going on in a man's heart? As there's outward progress and progress in the ministry, is there any progressive growth of pride in a man's heart? Are there any high thoughts of himself? Or is there a sense that I have nothing but what the Lord has given me? You know, you're not in the Christian life long before you realize it's not about how one starts the race, it's how one finishes the race. And in our social media generation, it's so easy to find out when well known men fall. And if you looked at the last five years, it's amazing how many men's ministries it appeared God's hand was on them. They were doing innovative stuff. Truth was being proclaimed. People were being converted. They were becoming "famous" and "celebrities." And you know what happened to many of those men? They fell. They fell. You can google it. It's easy to find.

So that begs the question, not how did you start, but how are you going to finish? And how you're going to finish, to answer that question, you ask yourself where am I at today? Today, do I fear God? Today, do I seek His face? Do I have a right assessment about myself? Do I have a proper view? I am nothing apart from what God's grace is doing and has done. Think about us as a church, as individual Christians. Where are we going to be 15 years from now? Not where were we the last 15. Yes, where are we today? Where are we going to be?

I think, like Uzziah, we're a church, we have men instructing us to fear God. We've got good teaching. He had that. We have prayer meetings. We seek the help of God. He did that. And God prospered him. We've seen that - the Lord prospering as we seek His face. It says, "Uzziah broke through the walls of Gath." We've seen that happen - not physical walls, but in the spiritual realm. There's been walls that are big and we've prayed, and there's been breakthroughs. We've seen that. Uzziah saw that. He had a big military victory. And what happened? His fame spread. In our generation, someone preaches a powerful sermon, it gets put on the Internet, their fame spreads. Same thing. Even in 2 Corinthians, Paul doesn't say who it is, but in chapter 8, he says we're sending a brother to you who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the Gospel.

So in Paul's day, there was someone who was famous among all the churches for his preaching of the Gospel. Some would say Luke - who knows? It wasn't Paul Washer. He wasn't alive back then. But someone was famous. Fame and being well known is not a sin. But it can put you in a vulnerable spot. Or the same thing with some of these Christian bands and music groups. They start out in the fear of God. They start out in the Bible, being men of prayer. Then,

they get famous. And you know what happens? Compromise. Things that are off limits for the Christian, they go and do. He went to offer incense. They do something different. Fame has been the death of many people.

Whether you have fame or not is not the issue. The issue is, do you have a humble view of yourself? Do you have a proper view of God? There's a big Christian website out there, and I went to look on their staff page. And at the top of the staff page, the founder of the website - you know what it says? This is a good thing. It says this: "The founder of (the website) wishes to remain anonymous." I can't find out who he is. And it has Matthew 23: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled." That's good. He knows. What happened to Uzziah and many of these other kings and many other Christians - this issue of becoming strong and pride growing and overtaking you - it's deadly.

Many individual Christians and churches start out humbly relying upon the Lord, but they grow, their fame spreads, and pride creeps in and they collapse. What will come of us? Uzziah is just one case of a warning in the Bible. His life was one of a prayerful leader who was helped by God. And it ended with him being an excluded leper. And in our day, you know what sometimes it is? A famous preacher - not to an excluded leper - but a famous preacher to a fallen adulterer. That happens all the time. And if you say, "Oh, that will never happen to me." You know what? Who's the one man who said that in the Bible? Peter. I'll never deny the Lord. And that was a proud, arrogant boast. And that man did deny the Lord. Let anyone who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.

Think about pride. For Uzziah specifically, it says, v. 15, his fame spread far, because he was marvelously helped by God. This was a work of God. "Till he was strong." Those early days of fighting and wrestling and no one knows who you are, and it's hard to get a fat, puffed up head, those days were gone. Everyone knew who he was now. He was strong. In other words, I think the writer is saying, he thought so highly of his achievements, his position. Look at all that I've done. Look at all that we've accomplished. God gave him success, and that success led to his fall. It's like somewhere along the way, these boastful thoughts of himself - at one point, that he would destroy, put to death - now they went unchecked.

Have you ever had that happen? Unchecked thoughts. Proud thoughts of yourself. Patting yourself on the back. You've done a good job. In some season in your life, you don't let them enter. But then some season, they start to creep in and you don't even notice it. Pride. It grows. It spreads. It catches you off guard. It even says here, v. 16, "When he was strong, he grew proud." He grew proud. It wasn't just all of a sudden. There was a growth. There was a progression of pride. High views of himself. Like cancer, pride grows and spreads. Your view of yourself increases and changes, so often, with the more victories and success you have. And then we went. He went to this deadly point. He got strong.

What did Paul say he boasted in? His weakness. You don't ever want to grow strong in that sense. You want to be weak. Paul boasted in his weakness, that Christ's power might be upon him. Meaning, if you don't have weakness, what does that imply? You're relying on your own strength, your successes, all that you've done. You go from looking to the Lord for help to this mindset of "I can do it." Look what all I've done. I don't have to be that prayerful now. This is easy. I mean, I've been doing this for so many years. It's easy now. Other Bible versions, they render this: "When he was strong, he grew proud to his destruction." Some it says, "When he

was strong, his heart was lifted up." Or, "his pride led to his downfall." Or, "his heart was so proud, that he acted corruptly." One renders it, "he grew arrogant."

This is a warning for us. We see a man who sought the Lord, and God made him prosper as king. And then we see his life end as an excluded leper. Fame spreading, your name being known, is fertile ground for the seeds of pride to rapidly grow upon. Think of pride. Some have said this, "if you want to please the devil, admire yourself." Someone said, "pride derails sound judgment." You're making sound judgment, you get pride, judgment goes out the door. Someone said, "Pride is the overestimation of oneself by reason of self-love. The humble man looks for authority and wants to get under it, but the proud man has trouble with authority. Insubordination is a mark of pride." Someone said, "high places are slippery places." Someone said, "The Lord would give us great things, if only He could trust us to not steal the glory for ourselves." Proverbs 16: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 29: "One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit, will obtain honor." That's what happened to Uzziah. His pride brought him low.

What happened to Paul? One who is lowly in spirit, will obtain honor. Paul was lowly in spirit. He obtained honor. Now, let's ask this question: How was he unfaithful to the Lord? Adultery like David? Is that what he did? Nope. What does the text say? V. 16, "He was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense." And Azariah comes in and he says it's not for you. It's for the priests. You're doing something that was not designed for you. This is not your office to be doing this.

How would we say that in more simple terms? Uzziah did not keep his own place. He tried to do someone else's work. Now, I don't think he would have done that as a new king. And he didn't. He sought the face of God. We don't have any record that in those early years, he was trying to go in there and do that. Yet, when he grew proud, he didn't keep his own place. He wanted to do someone else's work. He wasn't as strict to fear God and His standards as he was early on. In his pride, his fear of God that verse 5 says he was instructed in, was no longer present to that same degree. A task that was meant for the priest alone, Uzziah now thought he was able to do. What on earth? What would get in your mind to think that you could now do that? Pride.

The proud man who thinks he's arrived, he so often drops his standards. He's now above everyone else. In all the strictness and radical holiness that happened in his life to get to that point, where there was any fame because God's hand was on his life, then once he's to that point where he's well known, he throws the standards out. But that's the very thing that he was maintaining - radical holiness as he was looking to Christ. The desperate fighting as in the early days of growing the kingdom was now over. He's strong now. He doesn't need the Lord as desperately but that's a lie.

Think of how he might have reasoned. He could have thought, I'm famous now. Shouldn't every duty and task be within my reach? If I desire to do it, shouldn't I be able to do it? My fame is all the way to Egypt. He probably thought, you know what, those strict standards, I'm just getting worn out. Being this radical, fearing God, being in the Word all of the time... let's just have a couple easy years near the end of my Christian life. Let's coast some. Not being dominated by anything... boy, twenty years of that? Wait, doesn't 1 John 5:3 say this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome to us?

It shouldn't be a burden. But you get proud, you don't get prayerful, you're not near Christ. It's very easy for it to creep in, that lie that it's a burden to be holy, to be strict for Christ. You could even ask this: What led to this proud thinking? What was at the root of this? What was at the root of this? And I would say one thing is that he wasn't faithful in the small things, and what small thing am I thinking about? It's not something that's small. He was not faithful in something that is absolutely essential.

And the answer to that is how did he see success? Verse 5: "He set himself to seek God." And look at v. 5, it goes on and says this, "and as long as he..." As long as something was present in his life, God made him prosper. And the moment that you could not say as long as, but it was no longer there, no prospering. And that was his prayer life. That was seeking God in prayer. And when you seek God in prayer, you're in the Word. When you're in the Word, you're fearing God. You have a right view of God. When you have a right view of God, you have a right view of yourself. And you realize you're really, really small. And the moment you want to think you're something, you think of 1 Corinthians 4:7 and say what do I have that I have not received? And if I have received it, how can I boast? Who sees anything different in me or you? Whatever we have, it's by the grace of God. "When he was strong..." The strong man - he doesn't pray much.

You know, someone comes and says, well, should we do this, sir? Yeah, let's do this. You know what I bet Uzziah did in the early days? Should we do this, sir? Let me seek God. Let me pray. Lord, the Bible says to acknowledge You in all of my ways, and You will make straight my path. It says all. All the ways. Committing it to the Lord. Trusting in Him that He will act. So when he was strong, he was self-reliant. He was not a man of prayer.

Now, let's ask this question: How does the proud man respond to rebuke? How does the proud man respond to rebuke? As Uzziah went in the temple, it says Azariah and 80 men of valor. Eighty. Imagine if 80 of you all stood up right now to come and rebuke me. That's a crowd. It's not one. Not two. Eighty. Not just nobodies. Men of valor. They went and withstood the king. This is the man over them. It's not for you. It's for the priests who are consecrated, set apart, to burn incense. And they told him go out of the sanctuary, you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord our God. I don't know about you, but if 80 people were rebuking me - and in an abundance of counselors there is safety - wouldn't you listen up? Now, I can say that right now. But if I grow strong and proud and arrogant, and I'm convinced in my own mind I'm right and everyone else is wrong, it won't matter if 80 people or 80,000 people come and tell me I'm wrong. Pride can make you so deceived, so blind, you're unwilling to receive any criticism. You've already set it out in stone. I'm right. No one else is going to prove me wrong. Surely, he'd have some humility here, you would think.

But what was Uzziah's response? V. 19, "Then Uzziah was angry." Angry. Mad. It was like he was thinking in his mind, don't you know who I am? Don't you know who I am? You're telling me to go out? Don't you know who I am? That's probably something that was in his mind. That's what's leading to it. He's mad. How dare you rebuke me! How dare you reprove me! Don't you know who I am? And you're humiliating me before everyone and trying to prevent me to do this. My fame has spread to Egypt. Look at all this success. Look at the past victories. How dare you rebuke me! I've constructed walls and with skillful men, we've put catapults and trebuchets and different things on the walls to protect the kingdom. Why are you interfering with me? You

know what? Uzziah, his own estimation of himself was this: Do you know what the proud man's estimation of himself is? I'm above criticism.

Brethren, none of us will ever be above criticism in this life. You better always - I better always be able to take a rebuke and constructive criticism. If I ever get to a point where I can't, it's pride. And pride led to this man's ruin. Pride is deadly. I've seen 70 year old Christians willingly take rebuke from younger Christians. And it wasn't them being hyper-critical, it was a valid reproof. That's why those men aren't going and committing adultery. Because they can take criticism. Uzziah was defensive. I love what Mack Tomlinson has said about defensiveness. He says, "not being willing to be corrected is defensiveness, which is rooted in pride. Defensiveness is that feeling I get when anyone challenges me on something, possibly exposing that I have blind spots, that they see that I don't see."

You see, the proud man thinks no, that can't be right. I know my soul so well, whatever you're saying about me, it cannot be right. Because I've got myself figured out. No, that's why it's called a blind spot. You can't see it. And you know what? Look what the Lord does. Sin has consequences, brethren. Uzziah was angry, v. 19. He had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry - notice it's at that point when he had anger in his heart - it's like God was giving him an opportunity to humbly receive correction and walk out the door and obey. And he had anger. When he became angry with the priests, at that point, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord.

Brethren, imagine that. Imagine right here today that man doing that and leprosy just breaking out on his forehead. You know, that would make you fear God. I would hope. It would make you realize, the Lord and His Word is not that which we should toy with, but we should take dead serious. So in some ways, I believe God uses physical sickness to judge him. His head, where he's thinking lofty thoughts of himself, now has leprosy on it. Spreading we would think. It says they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out. So it doesn't sound like it was just that they yanked him out. It says he himself hurried. I think he got the point. And it's because the Lord struck him. The Lord struck Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the Holy Spirit. God struck them dead. What did this man do? Adultery like David? No. He put himself in a position that was not his, because of his pride, and somehow he now thought he could do that thing, which he should not be doing. Some would look at that and say that's a small thing. But again, remember, Korah. They were thinking God was withholding something from them - that Moses and Aaron were - and they sought a certain position. And God opened the earth up, and He consumed them. Sin has consequences.

The text says this, it says, "he grew proud to his destruction." What does that mean? Did he physically die at that point? No. He lived on. So it doesn't mean that. What type of destruction? Some versions they render "to his ruin." It seems from this point on, his kingdom came to ruin. Someone said this, "Pride is the greatest demolition crew in the history of the world." You hear that? Pride, high thoughts of yourself, being unable to be corrected - it's the biggest demolition crew in the world. I don't know who said that and I don't know if that's completely right, but again, the proverbs say a haughty spirit comes before destruction. How do you respond to such reproof? How do I? Do you say, no, I have the right to offer incense? Or I thought about this, maybe someone says, well, this is the liberty I have. Don't tell me I can't do

this! I've got my Christian liberties to do this thing. I don't care if all the pastors are telling me it's wrong. I don't care if they're all rebuking me. Don't tell me this. Pride.

You know what? It would sober us up a whole lot more, if the Lord acted in such a way as He did then in our day now. I'm not wishing that upon us at all. But I think, as Charles Leiter said, the fact that Ananias and Sapphira type situations where people lie and they don't get struck dead, Charles said that's God's judgment that that doesn't happen to us, because if it did, it would put such a fear of God into us where we would realize, God does not take sin lightly. This King Uzziah, in the year he died, that's when Isaiah saw the Lord in Isaiah 6. God is big. The same God we see here is our God today. Such severe discipline - or you could even say judgment - God definitely makes His message clear. I think it's David in Psalm 141. Remember what he prayed? Let the righteous rebuke me. It is a kindness. It is oil for my head, but Lord, let my head not refuse it. That's what David prayed.

We need to be like that. Luke 18: "Whoever exalts himself, will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself, will be exalted." Here, a man who humbly, did seek the Lord. But eventually, he switched it around, and he exalted himself and God humbled him. May we never think, who are you to reprove me. May we never lose a fear of God in our lives. This is a lesson for us to stay low. This is a lesson for us to make it a priority to be seeking God. As I already pointed out, v. 5, "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper."

Brethren, if you and I stop truly seeking God, and in pride, our Christianity, it's not a desperate life of seeking God, seeking His help, committing our way to Him, pride's going to come in. We're not going to prosper. To seek the Lord, to fear God, is a life or death priority. Now, I wanted to think of some examples. One in the Bible and some out of the Bible, of men who in their earlier years would not have dared to do what they did in their latter years. You hear that? Because that's what happened with Uzziah. In the earlier years, he wouldn't have dared to do these things. But in his latter years, he did.

And again, that's not beyond happening to any of us. We can't say there's no way that's going to happen to any of us. It could. Especially if we have success. We get famous. Pride creeps in. Because you become strong, you rely on yourself, on past victories... So the first one of these examples I thought of was from the Bible. It's King David. David had killed Goliath. He had many victories. He was living a very strict life. But his fault was like Uzziah's in some way. He did something he shouldn't have done. That something was him not going to war when the kings were to be out at war. But 2 Samuel 11 says David remained and sent Joab. David should have been at war.

Now, I'm assuming this, but David must have had some pride. Why not go to war? This is when the kings go to war. You went to war in the past. You had victories in the past. Why didn't you go now, David? Why didn't you go to war? Why did you send Joab and remain? And then you end up laying on your roof, idle and lazy. You see Bathsheba. You commit adultery. Then you have her husband murdered! If you just would have gone to war, David, you wouldn't have put yourself in a place for all that to happen. David - a man after God's own heart had that happen.

There's others. Christmas Evans, the one-eyed Welsh preacher. He had a very fruitful ministry for 15 years. Very fruitful. Fifteen. And then he fell under the influence of a false teaching that was a type of easy believism. And all you've got to do is have this faith. And there

wasn't this evidences of regeneration in a man's life. He got deceived by this false teaching. And he said this, this was after he got out of the false teaching, he said, "we thus, almost entirely took down what had taken fifteen years to raise." Just like that. Pride. Giving in to this false teaching. Being deceived. Not diligently seeking the Lord. Not truly testing everything to the Word and holding fast to what is good.

Another. Hal Harris. He was greatly used of God in the Welsh revivals, along with Daniel Rolands. But in 1749, Harris, who was a married man, became friendly with Syndey Griffith, and one writes this, "She was the estranged wife of another man. Confiding in his diary, Harris thought that God had revealed to him that his wife was about to die, and that it would clear the way for his marriage to Griffith. Harris began to invest in her with prophetic gifts and insights. Harris began bringing Griffith to the Methodist Association meetings, demanding she was given a place for special prominence." He wouldn't take correction. The man used in the Welsh revivals thinking his wife's going to die and he's going to marry another woman. And he's taking another woman all around with him? How could that happen? I'll tell you it can happen. At that point, parting of ways was inevitable.

George Whitefield was the first to act. He dismissed Harris from the Tabernacle Society in 1750. Then Daniel Rolands with the assistance of William Williams, he kept the majority of the movement under their control, while Harris, with a small group of his most devoted followers, they retreated away. A biographer of Harris says this, "At this time, he became very intolerant and would take no interference, and would accept no advice from his friends and followers." Does that sound familiar? Uzziah had 80 men of valor rebuke him. And he didn't hear it. Harris - God used him so mightily. But he would take no advice from his friends and followers. Pride puts you in a place where you're beyond criticism.

Eventually, Harris' friends denied him, one by one, and he was left almost alone. Shortly after, the lady Griffith, she died - not Harris' wife. He didn't have a word from God. And over the next years, Harris did improve, but he was never the same. And eventually him and Daniel Rolands, they were able to hold meetings again together, but it was never the same. You see, here Christmas Evans, here Hal Harris are - God mightily used them. I mean, Christmas Evans stood up, there were 7,000 people in a field where they just put him on the spot to preach. He was a one-eyed man. And he preached with such power. Was that a thing of the flesh? No. Was Uzziah having great prosperity a thing of the flesh? No. It was God.

One other. Anthony Norris Groves who I did a biographical sketch. I didn't get to mention this thing in his life when I did the study. He was a missionary to Iraq and then India. He always held to principles of trusting God by faith to provide. He had a silkworm farm in India. It was a business by which many native Christians were being provided work. God was blessing it. When one day, out of the blue, there came an offer of a loan of 30,000 rupees from a military man who had been converted through the ministry of Groves. And the military man wished to express his affectionate appreciation. So what do you do? Your whole life, there's a principle, trust God by faith, don't take out loans. Now one of your converts comes with 30,000 rupees and says, "I'll loan it to you." What do you do? Do you stay strict to the principles that God has impressed on you? That you believe are found in His Word? Harriet, his second wife, and others encouraged him that this was the hand of God to provide for expansion. He went ahead with the loan. They invested in more fields and it was not long before the disease of every kind began among the

crops. They made fresh efforts to restock the farms, but after four years, the attempts were finally abandoned.

Groves blamed himself for this happening. But why? And he gives us the answer. Like Uzziah, he had not waited on the Lord. It was said he became too much engrossed with the external affairs of the mission, which had hindered his enjoying his usual hours of retirement and communion with God. You hear that? His prayer life was affected. When did Uzziah prosper? When he was seeking the Lord. As long as... As long as he sought the Lord. He said this, "often we are beguiled in the worldly things with an idea that we can make them subservient to God's glory. But the things we thought would bend as a bow, to shoot as arrows against the enemies of God become the means of piercing us through with many sorrows, and leading us away from God. Nothing requires more spiritual discernment than to detect the snares of the enemy. They are often so covered over as to appear as if they're leadings from God." Grove put his finger on the point where he felt he had gone wrong. He said this - listen to this: "The prophet says, 'wait on thy God continually.' In the beginning of departure is found in only waiting on God occasionally. That's where Grove saw his departure. He went from being a man who continually waited on the Lord, to being a man who only occasionally waited on the Lord. That's what we saw happen with Uzziah. As long as he sought the Lord. As long... If you cease seeking God, you're going to get in pride. You get in pride, you're not going to hear criticism, rebuke. Then he said faith was Norris Grove's strongest point. But as his wife said, this first departure in all those years... that they could see, from the way of faith, was in the providence of God followed by the most bitter consequences. He lost five years of his life trying to pay off that debt. Because of one decision.

Now, I want to make an example up. I hope that this - maybe it already is in church history, but I hope it won't be recorded in our church history of our generation today. Imagine this: Imagine a generation of Christians. They're zealous for Christ. They're strict for holiness. The right hand that offend thee, they cut it off. They throw it away. They don't want to be dominated by anything. If there's anything that causes someone to stumble, they don't seize their rights. They give their rights up. But then, compromise comes in. They start allowing things in their lives that are sinful. But get this: They deceive themselves to think it is a liberty they have and that it's not a sin issue; when it is not at all an issue of liberty. Then, 80 men of valor come to reprove them. They don't hear. No, I'm not going to listen to you. You're wrong. You're being legalistic. They get angry that they are being told they cannot do that which they want to do. You see like Uzziah in pride, they've walked away from seeking God; away from the fear of God. And they can't hear now. But, no leprosy comes upon their heads. And they continue on in their deception. They think all is okay. But they don't recognize that they are defiling their conscience and it's subtly taking place. That's an example I thought of. I hope it never happens.

Do you see, brethren? We, like Uzziah, can be prayerful believers humbly relying on God and prosper. We can be genuinely helped by the Lord, but what about fifteen years from now? Will we not be as strict as we were early on? Will we be deceived like Hal Harris who God used in revival, but then he got emotionally attached to a woman who was not his wife? And he justified it as being from God? And ignored the counsel of friends? Will we compromise on doctrine like Christmas Evans and burn up the last fifteen years of our work? Will we go against our conscience and a giving principle to trust God and not get a loan, like Norris Groves did?

And go and get a loan for a building for our church? Will we refuse the rebuke of 80 priests who try to stop us from doing that which God has forbidden us to do? Will we get angry as Uzziah did? Or will you receive it as oil and a blessing on your head as David did?

We need God to keep us. To keep us humble. To keep us reliant on Him. To keep us seeking the Lord. Deuteronomy 17 - "The Word shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them." Why? Why be in the Word? Why be doing the Word - not just in it, but doing it? Keeping it? "That his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left."

Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Word that is sharper than any double-edged sword. Lord, thank You for the brethren in this church. Lord, I think of different brethren here who have corrected me on things I've said in my sermons. Different rebukes that I've received over the years. Lord, thank You for working humility in us, that we would not let our head refuse it, but see that it is oil. Father, I pray that fifty years from now, Lord, we will not look back and see in the history of this church, that we will not have a biography that pride came upon us, that we were strong in our own strength, that we could not take criticism and rebuke. Lord, please, You have to keep us. Lord, You have to keep working humility in our hearts. Lord, what do we have that we haven't received? Lord, we have nothing to boast in but You. For God forbid we boast in anything, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we here this morning determine to know nothing among anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Lord, we humble ourselves and ask You to forgive us of times when pride has come in our mind, when we've had high thoughts of ourselves, and had any subtle thought that we were something special. Lord, You're the One Who's special, Who's worthy of praise and honor. We worship You this day. Lord, You're worthy of worship. We thank You for the positions You've given us. We do not want to go against Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.