

## **The Success & Downfall of a King**

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Everyone wants to be successful. We want to reach the peaks of our respective careers. We want to provide a good life for ourselves and our families. We want to make a mark a feel as if our lives mattered.

Our drive for success comes from our Creator. He gave us His image. Like Him, we are creative and purpose-driven. The more we express God's image through productive lives, the more we fill the earth with His glory. Or at least this is what is supposed to happen. Often, we do not reflect God's glory through our success. Instead, we exalt ourselves. Pride distorts our thinking and ruins our hearts. Our earthly success becomes our spiritual demise.

### **The Success of King Uzziah**

The nation of Judah had a king that was successful by any measure. Uzziah became king at age sixteen. He ruled for fifty-two years. First and foremost, Uzziah was faithful to the Lord: "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" (2 Chron. 26:4-5).

King Uzziah conquered several cities of the Philistines and expanded the territory of Judah. He strengthened the security of the city of Jerusalem by building watchtowers. He irrigated new farmlands which contributed to the prosperity of the nation. Also, he strengthened the military. He oversaw the development of new weapons of warfare. The nation was on the cutting edge technologically during Uzziah's reign. As a result, Uzziah was internationally renowned: "And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong" (2 Chron. 26:15).

### **The Pride of King Uzziah**

The reign of Uzziah would have been a model for any king. He was faithful to the Lord. He served the people. He expanded the kingdom. Sadly, as his influence increased, so too did his pride: "But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction" (2 Chron. 26:16).

Uzziah's pride turned him away from the Lord. At the height of his unfaithfulness, he attempted to burn incense in the Temple. This was sacrilege. This mere attempt to usurp the divine authority of the priesthood was outrageous. The high priest, Azariah, with the support of eighty other priests, withstood Uzziah. Azariah commanded, "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" (2 Chron. 26:18)

Uzziah became angry with Azariah. The king was unwilling to listen to the high priest. Then, God intervened. Uzziah broke out in leprosy. He was quickly removed from the Temple. He lived with leprosy for the rest of his life. As a leper, he was not permitted to worship at the

Temple. Such a tragic end for a king who accomplished so much. There is much to be learned from the life and times of King Uzziah.

### Lessons Learned

**1). By the grace of God, we can be profitable.** Being faithful to the Lord does not mean we will get rich. It does not mean everything will work out in our favor in life. It means we will fulfill God's purposes for our lives.

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus spoke about a master who gave talents to his servants. One talent of gold was and is worth a large sum of money. The point is that the master gave each servant more than enough to become profitable (Matt. 25:14-30). Receiving God's grace by faith, enables us to be profitable: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10) Therefore, we do not have any excuse for being a failure.

**2). The danger of pride.** Uzziah demonstrates the corruptive nature of pride. Rather than giving glory to God for his success, Uzziah attempted to exalt himself. He became unreasonable towards Azariah and disobedient to God.

Success can inflate our ego. We may think that we know more than we actually do. When we are successful, we tend to take credit for our accomplishments. While we certainly must work hard, God is the One who deserves the credit. We must take steps to cultivate humility and gratitude as we become successful. Pride is the peril of success. Pride is a sign pointing to destruction.

**3). Intentions matter.** King Uzziah did not burn incense in the Temple. He intended to burn incense. The act would have been sinful; however, the intension was equally sinful. God cares about our intentions. God cares about our hearts. Attitudes produce behaviors. Good attitudes produce good behaviors. Bad attitudes produce bad behaviors. King Uzziah's heart was filled with pride; therefore, he acted rebelliously.

We must allow Jesus to mold and shape our hearts. We must use God's word to purify our hearts. We must remove lust and pride from our hearts. We must fill our hearts with humility and righteousness. We must make every effort to guard and protect our hearts.

*"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23).*

### Conclusion

Apart from king Solomon, Uzziah was as successful as any king in the history of God's people. His accomplishments remain impressive. Yet, his downfall must get our attention. All the success in the world will amount to nothing if we are unfaithful to God. The words of Jesus must resonate in our hearts as we embark on life: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).