

Full of Self or Full of God:

The Story of King Uzziah

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2 Chronicles 26:1-5,
16-21

Sermon Series:
Seven Greatest
Virtues and Vices:
Pride and Humility

*You can
either be full
of yourself, or
you can be
full of God;
but you can't
be both.*

Humility is “greatness in plain clothes” (Spencer W. Kimball). “The fullest and best ears of corn hang lowest toward the ground” (Bishop Reynolds).

Pride reminds me of a man who once went to the doctor and said: “Doctor, I don’t know what to do,” said the patient. “People shun me because I have delusions of grandeur.” “We’ll figure this out,” the doctor said. “Let’s start at the beginning.” “Okay,” the patient replied. “In the beginning I created the heavens and the earth...” (Jeff Strite).

You can either be full of yourself...or you can be full of God. BUT you can’t be both. Sooner or later, you’ve got to decide who is more important in your life, yourself or God.

King Uzziah thought he was his own Maker-Creator-God. Uzziah began his kingly reign in humility, but it ended in humiliation. As long as he remained humble before God, Uzziah prospered. But the moment pride took over, Uzziah’s life crumbled. You can either be full of yourself, or you can be full of God; but you can’t be both.

For over a half century, 52 years, Uzziah ruled over the Southern Kingdom of Judah (in 792-750 BC, during the time of the prophets Micah, Amos, Hosea).

The people of Judah now crowned sixteen-year-old Uzziah as their new king. After his father’s death, Uzziah rebuilt the city of Eloth and restored it to Judah. In all, Uzziah reigned for fifty-two years, in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem. Uzziah followed in the footsteps of his father, Amaziah, and was, in general, a good king so far as the Lord’s opinion of him was concerned. While Zechariah was alive Uzziah was always eager to please and seek God. Zechariah was a man who had special revelation from God. And as long as the king followed the paths of God, Uzziah prospered, for God blessed him. (2 Chronicles 26:1-5, The Living Bible, paraphrased)

Verses 6 to 15 describe Uzziah’s great power and achievements. Not since King David or Solomon had there been a king so rich in success or victorious in war. Uzziah,

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whose name means “Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,” prospered in **BATTLE**; he prospered in **BUILDING**; Uzziah prospered in **BOUNTY**.

King Uzziah prospered in **BATTLE**. He destroyed Israel's most-feared enemies with an army of over 307,000. Uzziah armed his soldiers with an arsenal like no other – body armor, flaming arrows, a revolutionary catapulting system! King Uzziah prospered in **BUILDING**. He designed fortresses and military outposts throughout the Southern Kingdom. He fortified the entire city of Jerusalem with towers and impenetrable walls at key strategic gates. Uzziah prospered in **BOUNTY**. He engineered state-of-the-art irrigation and reservoir systems for his crops, vineyards and vast herds of livestock.

In Battle, Building and Bounty, God abundantly blessed King Uzziah. The key verse is 5, it's stated twice: *“Uzziah was eager to please and seek God ... as long as he followed the paths of God, Uzziah prospered.”* There's a lesson here. Early on, Uzziah sought to seek God, to follow God. Even into his peak years, he was conscious of his weaknesses and inabilities to rule Judah alone. With humility, Uzziah knew his utter need for God's help. Uzziah knew that his worth, successes, his life were dependent upon his dependency on God!

But something went wrong. Uzziah had the opportunity to become one of the greatest kings of Israel, but he became disgraced and diseased as one of the kings most forgotten. Uzziah's pride was the beginning of his downfall.

But at that point Uzziah became proud, and corrupt. He sinned against the Lord his God by entering the forbidden sanctuary of the Temple and personally burning incense upon the altar. Azariah the High Priest went in after Uzziah with eighty other priests, all brave men, and demanded that he get out. “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense,” they declared. “That is the work of the priests alone, who are consecrated to this work. Get out, for you have trespassed, and the Lord is not going to honor you for this!” Uzziah was furious, and refused to set down the incense burner he was holding. But look! Suddenly, leprosy appeared in his forehead! When Azariah and the others saw it, they rushed him out; in fact, Uzziah himself was as anxious to get out as they were to get him out, because the Lord had struck him. So King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death and he lived in isolation, cut off from his people and from the Temple. (2 Chronicles 26:16-21, The Living Bible, paraphrased)

Here's the truth: You and I haven't done anything to deserve the blessings we enjoy.

There are TWO important things God wants us to see this morning. One, God hates a prideful heart. Two, God gives grace to the humble. **GOD HATES A PRIDEFUL HEART.** The sin of pride elevates “Me-Myself-and-I” to a place of importance not intended for me. C.S. Lewis speaks to us precisely about PRIDE:

“There is no fault,” Lewis writes, “which makes a person more unpopular [than pride], and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. The vice I am talking about is Pride, or self-conceit... It is the essential vice; the utmost evil is Pride. Pride leads to every other sin; it is the complete ANTI-GOD state of mind” (Mere Christianity).

Blessed by God, prospering beyond measure, Uzziah began to believe that he had it all together, that it was all for him, all about him, all because of him. We often see ourselves in the same danger. God pours out blessings, such that our lives experience much goodness, even greatness. It feels good, comfortable, and seductive—the strokes, status, the security. Before we know it, we've forgotten that God is the source of it, all of it! We see ourselves as a notch or two above the rest around us. “Look

at all my gifts; look how proficient and talented I am; look at my grades; look at how much I've achieved.” As I become full of myself I gradually empty God out of my life. Actually? No, not entirely. I still keep God with me, but on my own comfortable and controlling terms. Pride.

But what's wrong with a little pride? I mean, can't I be proud of my car... my home... my job? Can't I be proud of my children? Have I shown you my kids/grandkids lately? Can't I be proud of what I've accomplished? Here is the test for when the real plague of pride sets in and infects us. **If** I think these things are mine (family, work, faith) because I deserve them; **if** I think these things are mine because I got them on my own wisdom, hard work, and cleverness; **if** I think that these things can't be taken away, or damaged ... **THEN** I have the pride of a foolish man (Jeff Strite). What did that patient say to the doctor? “The trouble with a self-made man is that he worships his creator.” Or, as John Ortberg puts it, “We'd like to be humble ... but what if no one notices?”

Here's the truth: You and I haven't done anything to deserve the blessings we enjoy. The great country I live in on this 4th of July weekend; the loving family I was born into; meeting and falling in love with my wife, Connie; raising up our beautiful daughters—I did not

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do anything to deserve any of it. Everything I have, all I am, is a BLESSING from God. All of it, is a GIFT, for you, and for me.

Uzziah's pride blinded him to God's blessings and brought about his demise. All of the wonderful things Uzziah did; all of his 52-years of accomplishments and fame boiled down to four words— there in the last verse of chapter 26 (v.23). It's the last detail about King Uzziah, written on his gravestone, four words, "**He was a leper.**" Uzziah is remembered for a foul disease. A humble king at the start, he died a humiliated king in the end.

God hates a prideful heart. And, number TWO, **GOD GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.** From the disciple-apostle Peter: *"And all of you serve each other with humble spirits, for God gives special blessings to those who are humble, but sets himself against those who are proud. If you will humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, in his good time, God will lift you up."* (1 Peter 5:5-6; *Living Bible*)

We have juxtaposed the Vice of Pride against the Virtue of Humility. But they're really NOT direct opposites. The opposite of a proud person is a negative-thinking person who lacks self-esteem, who allows him/herself to be a stepped-on kind of person. This is not humility. "Humility is not

thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less"(C.S. Lewis) . The virtue of humility, instead, is having a healthy image of ourselves as God sees us. And God sees us as broken but beloved, as messy but marvelous! Humility is living and knowing who you are in relation to who your Savior-God is! Humility is living a life of conscious, daily dependency on God. You can either be full of yourself... or you can be full of God. BUT you can't be both. Sooner or later you've got to decide who is more important in your life.

In the early 11th-century, King Canute ruled over England. King Canute was a powerful king, AND he was a godly man. During his reign, King Canute would often hear people come into his court and flatter him with extravagant praises of his greatness, power, and invincibility. Over time, he grew tired of all the excessive praise, because— unlike King Uzziah—Canute wasn't full of himself. To prove it, one day, King Canute ordered his chair to be set down on the sea's shore. And, as he sat upon his royal chair, with much fanfare, the king commanded the tide **not** to come in. He commanded the incoming tides not to get him wet. But no matter how forcefully King Canute ordered the waters to obey, they didn't listen. Soon the waves lapped up around his chair, soaking his royal clothes.

***Do you want
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The story goes that the king left the beach and went to a church, where he found a statue of the crucified Christ. Coming face-to-face with the statue of the crucified Christ, there upon the king hung his crown ... and never wore it again (Jeff Strite).

Pride or Humility? Do you want to be full of yourself, or do you want to be full of Christ? Today you may need to make that decision. Maybe you need to turn your crown over to Jesus and let him have His way in your life. Maybe, as a Christ-follower, you need God to fill your life. Maybe you need to hang up your crown (your pride) and let God make use of your life. Maybe you and I need God to fill up our lives to be useful in this church, in some local mission, outreach, or purpose. Maybe you need God to fill up your life to make your life useful in mending a relationship; or making your life useful in confronting a harmful, unhealthy habit or circumstance. Maybe today, as a Christ-follower, you and I need God to fill our lives to be able to say, with all humility, "Here Am I, Lord. Take me, use me, and make me fully yours!"