

# Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Des Moines, WA June 21, 2015

## 2 Chronicles 26

### The Eight Deadly Sins: Pride

1. The Lesson from King Uzziah
2. The Problem of Pride Continues
3. Jesus Gives the Answer to Pride

Hymns: 501 – 411 – Distribution: 471, 312 –  
Closing: 321

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

“Pride comes before the fall.” It has to be one of the most used clichés that there is, doesn’t it? Yet, it is for a reason. Time and time again, we see just how true it often is. In a moment, all of us could think of an example of a politician or an athlete or a celebrity whose pride and arrogance couldn’t be humbled until a fall from grace forced humility.

Pride is not something that evades the follower of God, either, as we see today in a lesson about pride from the Old Testament book of 2 Chronicles. Chapter 26 of that book chronicles the life of one of the many kings of Judah, this one by the name of Uzziah, whose name means “the Lord is my strength.” We will turn there in our pew Bibles, and use those verses to learn about Uzziah, and also about the dangers that pride holds for each one of us.

What we are told there is that after being named king at the youthful age of 16, Uzziah did things right. Verses 4-5 tells us that *“He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done.”*<sup>5</sup> *He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.”*

If you know just a little about the kings of Israel and Judah, you know that a king doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord was a rarity. Uzziah was off to a good start, and God blessed this young king who followed him. Vs. 6-15 tell us about the broad and diverse successes that this king found as he practiced what his name meant and viewed the Lord as his strength.

We hear that Uzziah was successful in war, using an expansive and advanced Army to drive out nations and extend the borders of God’s chosen nation farther

out than even during the days of David. He engaged in tremendous building projects that fortified and helped the city of Jerusalem. He even farmed extensively. It was all so great that people came from far and wide to see all that was accomplished under Uzziah’s reign.

And there was to be no doubt about the reason for his success. Verse 5 declares that God gave him success. Verse 7 shares that “God helped him” and the end of verse 15 tells us that Uzziah “was greatly, or miraculously, helped.”

While God built Uzziah’s life and his kingdom and caused his name to become known throughout the world, those accomplishments were building Uzziah’s pride. And in verse 16 and following, we are told that after years of seeking the Lord and finding blessing after blessing, *“Uzziah’s pride led to his downfall. 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> *Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in.*<sup>18</sup> *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.”*<sup>19</sup> *Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. 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.*<sup>20</sup> *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.*<sup>21</sup> *King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house—leprous, and excluded from the temple of the LORD. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.”*

Pride comes before the fall – a cliché for a reason, and Uzziah’s life was proof. After all the success that he found, Uzziah came to a point in his life where he viewed himself as more than God had made him. He was no longer content to go and meet and worship God in the way that God had prescribed for his people, instead wanting to worship in the way that he thought best. That was pride. He saw himself as more worthy and pious than the other kings and people who had been restricted from God’s house prior to him. That was pride. He angrily opposed the rebuke that came from God’s priest, refusing to repent. That was pride.

God met that pride that had swelled up in Uzziah with a swift fall. As a show of immediate rebuke, God afflicted Uzziah with an incurable skin disease,

an affliction that remained with him until the day of his death, an affliction that shunned him from society; an affliction that barred him from worshipping with God's people. Literally, verse 21 tells us that Uzziah lived the rest of his days in a house of freedom. In his pride, Uzziah had desired to free himself from God's gracious rule. In his punishment, Uzziah would learn the terrible result of that prideful desire.

As we move forward a few thousand years, pride continues to afflict so many in this world, though you'd hardly know that it is a problem by looking at society. The pride that was once considered a deadly sin – even the deadliest of sins, and the vice that led to all others – is now encouraged and embraced as a positive attribute.

We want leaders who are proud and mighty, not meek and humble. Athletes are celebrated as they pound their chests and boast about their accomplishments. People are encouraged to be proud of whoever they are and whatever they want to do, even as they live against God's Word and God's designs. Even in seemingly innocent ways, pride makes its way into our lives; as we encourage our children to be proud of their accomplishments; we can even make days of thanks like Father's Day into days which fuel our pride.

But despite this acceptance, pride continues to be what it has always been since the devil, being fueled by pride, decided he was better than God. It is a source of trouble that leads us to think of ourselves more highly than we ought; to exalt ourselves beyond our place; to make ourselves the most important part of our world. And pride so often affects us in all the same ways that it did with King Uzziah.

Pride first of all gets us into trouble as sinners. Just as it did with Uzziah, pride often keeps us from recognizing the harmful ways that we walk, and admitting that the paths that we have chosen are wrong. Pride tells us that we know better than God what is good for us; that we know more than God's Word how we should live. And if you think, "Not me," just consider: how many people, people even that once sat among us, will be in eternal hell not because they did not know or hear about Jesus, but because they were too prideful to repent of their sins and listen to their Father's call in his Word?

Pride can also get us into trouble as Christians. Again, as it was with Uzziah, how often doesn't pride keep us from recognizing that it is God who helps us and gives us success in every area of our lives? Instead, how often don't we swell with pride when our accomplishments are lauded? How often don't we fail to point to God when others are pointing to us?

And pride can even get us into trouble as a church. It is pride that has us look with Uzziah at our accomplishments and proclaim, "Look what we were able to build." It is pride that has us boast, "We have it right" as we compare ourselves to other churches who are reckless with God's Word.

Pride comes in ugly ways and the reality is that those are just a fraction of the ways in which pride fills our hearts and affects our attitudes and actions; we'd never have time to touch on them all. How important it is for each of us to evaluate our lives, and take note of the areas where the Devil builds that sinful pride in us.

Yet, for all the ways that pride threatens and gets us into trouble, Jesus brings the solution to pride.

We see it first in his humble work. As the Son of God from eternity, Jesus had all the glory of God, all the power of God, all the authority of God. Yet, what did he do? He humbled himself, he came to this earth as a baby, he lived under the burdensome requirements of the Law, he subjected himself to Satan's temptations, and then he suffered and died on a cross.

Jesus did all that work to bring forgiveness to people whose pride brought them so much trouble. Jesus did that work to bring forgiveness to prideful people like you and me.

And when we know the forgiveness that Jesus brings through his humble work, then we can also look to Jesus and follow his humble example. We will see the God of all who bent down and washed his disciples' feet. We will see the God of perfection who went and ate with "sinners." We will see the God of love who said, "Love as I have loved." Forgiven whenever we acknowledge our pride and bring it to Jesus, we are also empowered to live in humility just as our Savior did.

It was once said that while "pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend." As we look at our lives, it is often that enemy that we find in our own hearts. Yet, may we give thanks that we have all the blessings of humility through our dearest friend Jesus, the humble Savior.