

7. The path to self destruction

November 13, 2014

As I was preparing this study, I googled the words "Self destruction". I found an article that was titled "10 Easy Paths to Self Destruction". It started with "Eating junk", followed by "Smoking", "Watching TV too much", "Stressing out", "Drinking a lot". The list went on. The number one was "Sacrificing sleep". Obviously they only talk about physical side.

A person can do all the right things that are opposite of this list, yet still be on the path to self destruction. Jesus taught us in His Gospel that we should be more concerned about our spiritual side than the physical.

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

It is evident that the majority of people around the world, including many born-again believers are more concerned about their temporal physical world than their eternal spiritual where it really matters. I am not saying that we should ignore the physical side, but we should know better and act better as the followers of Christ.

I cannot say that the ancient Israel people who lived in the Holy L and weren't much different than today's people. Tonight we are going to meet two kings of Judah – Amaziah and Uzziah. They all had a good start, but both of them finished horribly . As we look at these two kings, we can gain some practical insights into the will and ways of our Lord as well as the terrible path to self destruction that is caused by pride.

A. SERVING GOD WITHOUT A HEART

2 Chronicles 25:1-2 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2 And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a loyal heart.

Amaziah was the son of Joash, the 'boy king' who turned away from the Lord later in his life after his godly mentor died. Like his father, Amaziah had a great beginning, but he was merely following formality, not because he wanted.

Over the last weekend with several guys from our church, I went to the Men 's Conference. It was great. The theme of the conference was "Be Imitators of God" from Ephesians 5. You had to be a total deaf not to hear from the Lord how we are supposed to live because speaker after speaker expounded the Scriptures.

At the breakfast table on Sunday, there was a young man from another Calvary Chapel who told us that he'd like to have fun and dance and go out with girls. So I asked him, "Are you telling me that you'd like to hop in the sack with these unbelieving girls?" He answered, "Yes." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I asked him again, "What were you listening to at this conference?" There was absolutely no shame in his part. Rambo was sitting next to me and he probably was thinking, "Pastor, calm down. He is not worth killing for."

I saw this young man raising his hands during the worship. What was the purpose of worshipping the Lord since he had no intention to do what the Lord was telling him to do throughout the conference? Because this young man did not have a loyal heart for the Lord.

B. THE LORD IS ABLE TO GIVE YOU MUCH MORE THAN THIS

2 Chronicles 25:6-9 He also hired one hundred thousand mighty men of valor from Israel for one hundred talents of silver. 7 But a man of God came to him, saying, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel--not with any of the children of Ephraim. 8 But if you go, be gone! Be strong in battle! Even so, God shall make you fall before the enemy; for God has power to help and to overthrow." 9 Then Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The Lord is able to give you much more than this."

Amaziah hired the 1000 unbelieving mercenaries from Israel with one hundred talents of silver which is about 22 million dollars because Amaziah's faith was in numbers of soldiers, not in the Lord. To make the matter worse, the king hired unbelieving soldiers from Israel. The Lord used a prophet to rebuke the king and warn him.

You guys remember what the apostle Paul taught us about not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers. This is not only in relationships, but also in business dealings. I understand that we can not do businesses with Christians only, but we don't have to put ourselves in the same shoes as king Amaziah did. We need to remember that the Lord is the One who protects us and provides for us, not this unbelieving world.

V9 shows the real heart of Amaziah. He was counting the cost and more concerned about the bottom line than pleasing the Lord. This is a rather familiar question that many Christians would ask, "How much will it cost me to be obedient?" For that question, I'd like to ask a question to that person: "Jesus gave all. What would you hold back from Jesus to whom we owe everything including the very breath in our lungs and the very heartbeat in our body?"

I am sure that you remember an old hymn "Jesus paid it all" by Elvina Hall:
"Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow."

On many occasions, we become such spiritual cheapskates and end up shortchanging ourselves. In our dumb and carnal logic, we think that if we let go of our worldly things, we cannot replace it because God is so poor to provide it for us. Jesus promised us that we would have abundant life which doesn't mean that we become millionaires or billionaires, rather rich in spirit.

C. DUMB AND DUMBER

2 Chronicles 25:14-16 Now it was so, after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up to be his gods, and bowed down before them and burned incense to them. 15 Therefore the anger of the Lord was aroused against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from your hand?" 16 So it was, as he talked with him, that the king said to him, "Have we made you the king's counselor? Cease! Why should you be killed?" Then the prophet ceased, and said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not heeded my advice."

The Edomites were living in the mountains of Seir. The Lord gave Amaziah a victory over a difficult enemy in a difficult place. Yet the dumb king decided that the enemy's gods were more worthy to be worshiped than the Lord who just gave him the victory. Then, he did a dumber thing by threatening the life of the prophet who spoke the truth against him.

Amaziah's victory brought out the truth of him. Previously he went along in serving the Lord, but now he completely turned himself to full blown idolatry, persecution, pride, and apostasy.

I like what Benjamin Franklin said about pride: "There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility."

D. THE HUMILIATING DEFEAT THAT THE KING EARNED

2 Chronicles 25:20-23 But Amaziah would not heed, for it came from God, that He might give them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought the gods of Edom. 21 So Joash king of Israel went out; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another at Beth Shemesh, which belongs to Judah. 22 And Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his tent. 23 Then Joash the king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth Shemesh; and he brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate--four hundred cubits.

Amaziah was bent on defeating Israel and wanted to become the ruler of a united kingdom. The truly humble person sees things as God sees them and doesn't live on illusions. Pride blinds the mind, distorts the vision and so inflates the ego that the person can't tell truth from fiction.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride leads us to disobedience to the Lord which leads to the path of self destruction. There is no stop unless we repent from our pride and ask the Lord to forgive us from our sins. That is exactly what happened to Amaziah. He earned this humiliating defeat every bit of it.

The decision to attack Israel was his alone, but the price paid for the foolish attack was paid by the whole kingdom of Judah. It is a sober warning to all leaders, to consider how their foolish decisions affect many other people.

E. ANOTHER PRIDEFUL HEART

2 Chronicles 26:16-23 But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the Lord--valiant men. 18 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. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the Lord God." 19 Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in

the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar. 20 And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him. 21 King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. 22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote. 23 So Uzziah rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of burial which belonged to the kings, for they said, "He is a leper." Then Jotham his son reigned in his place.

Uzziah's name means "Jehovah is strength." What a great name! The people made him king when his father Amaziah was taken to Samaria after his foolish war against the king of Israel.

Uzziah also had a great start like his father. But all the success and people's adoration got into his head. How unfortunate for him to think that he was above the Law of God that was given to God's people to follow!

The Lord separated the kings and priests. A priest could become a prophet like Ezekiel, Zechariah, and John the Baptist, but no prophet or king could become a priest. Only Jesus Christ could handle the offices of prophet, high priest, and king combined according to the order of Melchizedek. Did Uzziah not know the Law of God through Moses? He knew, but he thought that since he was favored by the Lord and the Lord did all these wonderful things for him that he didn't have to abide by God's rule. WRONG!!!

When Azariah the high priest and 80 priests stood against this very popular and powerful king, they knew that they could be executed. But they had only one desire – obeying and glorifying the Lord, not the king.

When we are in times of prosperity, it is extremely easy to fall into the trap of pride. This path of pride and self destruction is littered with once-godly people from the past, to this day, and will continue into the future.

No one is irreplaceable; no one is indispensable. We are nothing more than God's people who must get all the help from Him. We have absolutely nothing of our own to show off other than sins. The moment when we think that God cannot do His things without us is the time we start to head downward spiral.

Had Uzziah immediately repented from his pride truly and left the temple, the Lord would have forgiven him, but this arrogant king stood his ground in defiance, not to the priests, but to God.

In the vast majority of cases, the pastors who get into sins don't confess their sins and do what is right in the Lord. Rather they continue in their sins until they get caught. Even then, somehow many of them think that they can continue in the ministry in the same capacity. It doesn't work that way.

I don't know how long Uzziah lived in an isolated house. I am sure that every time he looked at his deforming body and hands and feet, he remembered his sin of pride. Could he blame the Lord for this? If he had the right mind, he only could blame himself for it.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) Be humble or we'll stumble.

2) Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.