

Sermon: Stop it. Just stop it.

Text: 2 Chronicles 26

Introduction:

Are you familiar with the word “hubris”?

It means arrogance and excessive pride. This can be something a character feels internally, but it usually translates to the character's actions. A modern, real-life example of hubris might be a politician who thinks he's too beloved to lose an election and chooses to skip campaigning.

The origin of the word “hubris” is fascinating. The concept of hubris comes from Ancient Greece, and you can see it in action in literature from the period. Originally, the word was used to describe the character of humans who were so overconfident that they believed they could become godlike. Over time, the English word came to mean a general overconfidence that may be excessive enough to lead to a downfall.

There is a difference between pride—and hubris. Pride is pleasure taken in one's accomplishments or the accomplishments of another person. It's confidence, but the confidence is often in proportion to the person and his or her actions. Hubris is pride multiplied until it is out of proportion. A student who is proud of his or her writing skills may work hard on an essay and turn it in with confidence. A student with hubris may put only a cursory effort into the essay, relying on his or her writing genius instead of hard work.

Our text today features a classic example of hubris.

As we continue our study of the various kings of the nation of Judah—we come to the very lengthy (52 years) reign of King Uzziah (790-739BC). In much the same manner as several of the kings before him, King Uzziah sought to honor God as long as there were mentors in his life who were there to help him. We are told in 2 Chronicles 26:5: “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.” That's all well and good...until Zechariah is no longer in the picture.

The most telling verse in chapter 26 is verse 16: “But after Uzziah became powerful, his 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.” This was beyond forbidden! Only the priests had access to the inner temple—and were allowed to burn the incense. This went beyond ordinary pride. This was outright hubris.

Which sets that stage for the Voice of God to speak once more—

Examination:

- **Read 2 Chronicles 26**
 - How old was Uzziah, when he became king?
 - Most scholars believe that his given name was Azariah (which is he also called—see 2 Kings 15). But the name that he became known for was

- Uzziah—which means “Strength of God.” How might taking this name for yourself be a positive thing? How might it become a negative thing?
- What did Uzziah build and restore to Judah?
 - How many years did Uzziah reign?
 - Who was the mother of Uzziah? Why do you think the chronicler (most like Ezra the priest) mentions these kinds of details?
 - Verse 4 says, he did _____ in the sight of the LORD.
 - What role did Zechariah play in his life? What did he teach him? Is there anyone in your life who does this for you?
 - What caused Uzziah to prosper? Do you believe that God still “prosper” people who seek to honor Him?
 - Who did Uzziah war against? Does anyone else come to mind when you think about Gath? (see 1 Samuel 17)
 - When Uzziah placed his faith in God, God helped him against whom? What happened as a result?
 - What did Uzziah build at Jerusalem? Why did they dig wells?
 - Who was the scribe under Uzziah?
 - How many officers did he have over his army? How large was the regular army?
 - What were some of the things Uzziah prepared for his army?
 - What can we learn about how warfare was conducted from verses 14-15?
 - What did Uzziah do, that would mean his destruction? How is this an example of hubris?
 - Who were the only ones allowed to burn incense before the LORD? Why?
 - Who tried to stop him?
 - What happened to Uzziah, when he became angry at the priest for trying to stop him?
 - Why do you think God struck him with leprosy? What were the implications of this condition? How long did his leprosy continue? Where did he live, while he had the leprosy?
 - Who reigned in his stead?
 - Where was he buried?

Application:

Think about our world today. How are people treating God with contempt? In what ways are you seeing actions and attitudes that can be viewed as outright hubris? Is God being patient...and if so, why?

Is there anything in your own life, personally, that walks the thin line of pride and hubris? Is God speaking to you about this? What is He saying? What is God asking you to do about it?