

Oh Lord, It's Hard to be Humble #86

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Thesis: The account of the rise and fall of King Uzziah warns us of the dangers of pride. Through his life, we see a pattern often repeated even today – prosperity, pride, and punishment. Instead of being filled with pride, we ought to emulate the humility of Jesus.

Support: 2 Chronicles 26:1-23

1. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b.

2. Introduction

- a. Near the pinnacle of his career in 1978, country music sensation Mac Davis had this top 10 hit.

Oh Lord it's hard to be humble
when you're perfect in every way.
I can't wait to look in the mirror
cause I get better looking each day.
To know me is to love me
I must be a hell of a man.
Oh Lord it's hard to be humble
but I'm doing the best that I can.

I used to have a girlfriend
but she just couldn't compete
with all of these love starved women
who keep clamoring at my feet.
Well I prob'ly could find me another
but I guess they're all in awe of me.
Who cares, I never get lonesome
cause I treasure my own company.

I guess you could say I'm a loner,
a cowboy outlaw tough and proud.
I could have lots of friends if I want to
but then I wouldn't stand out from the crowd.
Some folks say that I'm egotistical.
Hell, I don't even know what that means.
I guess it has something to do with the way that I
fill out my skin tight blue jeans.

- b. Presumably, Mac Davis sang these words tongue-in-cheek; however, it seems like humans, in general, and celebrities, in particular, have a problem with pride.
 - i. Listen to some of these quotes.
 1. U2's Bono once said, "I don't mean to be arrogant, but I do feel that we are meant to be one of the great groups."



2. How about these words, “I can walk into a room and if a man doesn’t look at me he’s probably gay” – Kathleen Turner. (I’m not sure if she could or would make such a statement today).
 3. Serena Williams, the female tennis star, said, “I’m definitely worth a lot of money, I’m exciting. I smile a lot, I win a lot, and I’m very sexy.”
 4. Actor Kevin Costner asserted, “It sounds vain, but I could probably make a difference for almost everyone I met if I chose to involve myself with them professionally or personally.”
 5. Or consider these words, “I am beautiful, famous, and gorgeous. I could have any man in the world,” compliments of Anna Kournikova.
 6. After Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid complimented then freshman senator Barack Obama after a speech, President Obama replied, “Harry, I have a gift.”
- c. Brothers, sisters, and friends, I wish I could say pride only infects politicians, business leaders, sports stars, and entertainers.
- i. Unfortunately, however, we all know this is not the case.
 1. We may see proud people in our schools.
 - a. Valedictorians, quarterbacks, cheerleaders, student body presidents, prom kings and queens.
 2. We may see proud people where we work.
 - a. Owners, bosses, owners’ kids.
 3. We may see proud people in our communities.
 - a. Doctors, lawyers, big businessmen, big farmers, rich people.
 4. We may even witness proud people within the church.
 - d. If we are not careful, pride can infect us; it can infect you, and it can infect me.
3. **This morning, let us study pride together and see if we can learn something from the account of King Uzziah. His story is found in 2 Chronicles 26. Let us study this chapter in three sections, corresponding to our three main points.**
4. **First, prosperity. Notice the God-given prosperity enjoyed by King Uzziah.**
- 26:1-15**, “¹ And all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. ² He built Eloth and restored it to Judah, after the king slept with his fathers. ³ Uzziah was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. ⁴ And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ 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. ⁶ He went out and made war against the Philistines and broke through the wall of Gath and the wall of Jabneh and the wall of Ashdod, and he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. ⁷ God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians who lived in Gurbaal and against the Meunites. ⁸ The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong. ⁹ Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the Angle, and fortified them. ¹⁰ And he built towers in the wilderness and cut out many cisterns, for he had large herds, both in the

Shephelah and in the plain, and he had farmers and vinedressers in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil. ¹¹ Moreover, Uzziah had an army of soldiers, fit for war, in divisions according to the numbers in the muster made by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders. ¹² The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses of mighty men of valor was 2,600. ¹³ Under their command was an army of 307,500, who could make war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. ¹⁴ And Uzziah prepared for all the army shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and stones for slinging. ¹⁵ In Jerusalem he made engines, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and great stones. And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong.

- a. Uzziah means, "Yahweh is my strength."
 - i. King Uzziah was also called Azariah, which means, "Yahweh has helped."
 - ii. During the early years of his administration, God was Uzziah's strength, and God helped him a great deal.
 - iii. **26:5**, "⁵ 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."
 - I. King's Uzziah's early years were characterized by God-given prosperity.
 - b. The text says he enjoyed great military strength.
 - i. King Uzziah had an army of 307,500 troops led by 2,600 mighty men of valor (**26:12-13**).
 - ii. **26:14** says the entire army was well equipped.
 - iii. Moreover, as defense, the city of Jerusalem enjoyed fortified towers (**26:9**) and great engines for shooting arrows and great stones (**26:15**).
 - iv. King Uzziah presided over a powerful military, and he used it.
 1. He made war with the Philistines, broke through their cities' walls, and built cities in their lands (**26:6**).
 2. He prevailed over the Arabians and the Meunites (**26:7**).
 3. Rather than warring, the Ammonites paid taxes to King Uzziah (**26:8**).
 4. Because of its military power, the territory controlled by Uzziah extended all the way to the border of Egypt (**26:8**).
 - c. God also granted King Uzziah great economic strength; at this time Judah had guns and butter.
 - i. He built cities (**26:6**) and towers (**26:10**).
 - ii. He cut out many cisterns for his large herds (**26:10**).
 - iii. Uzziah loved the soil and enjoyed farms and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands (**26:10**).
 - iv. The economy in Judah was strong, and King Uzziah was rich.
 - d. "And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped [by God], till he was strong" (**26:15**).
 - i. God gave King Uzziah prosperity.
5. **Second, pride. This power and prosperity filled the king with pride.**



26:16-18, “¹⁶ But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. ¹⁷ But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, 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. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God."

- a. C.S. Lewis said, “A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you’re looking down, you can’t see something that’s above you.”
 - b. King Uzziah sought the Lord, and God made him prosper.
 - i. Eventually, however, Uzziah forgot about God’s role in his success and prosperity.
 - ii. He started to believe he was somebody special, and that he gained all of his power and prosperity because of who he was, rather than who God was.
 1. As he was looking down on everything, he could no longer see the God who was above him.
 2. He grew proud.
 - a. I love U2’s music. Bono is an incredibly gifted musician and businessman.
 - i. Kevin Costner is an extremely talented actor.
 - ii. Serena Williams is a phenomenal tennis players.
 - iii. Anna Kournikova is drop-dead gorgeous.
 - iv. President Obama surely is a great orator.
 1. All of this is true, because God has given to each of them wonderful and rare gifts.
 2. God blessed King Uzziah. God blessed all of these celebrities. God blesses you and me.
- b. If you are a ten, it is because God made you a ten.
 - i. If you have a rare talent, it is because God made you that way.
 - ii. If you are smart, it is because God blessed you with intellect.
 - iii. If you are wealthy, it is because God allowed you to accrue your wealth.
- c. James writes in **James 1:17**, “¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”
 - i. If something good [from God’s perspective] is happening in your life, it’s because God gave it to you.
 - ii. Rather than being filled with pride, you ought to be filled with thanksgiving.
- c. King Uzziah grew proud.
 - i. The scripture says, “For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense” (**26:16**).



1. The word translated as unfaithful in the ESV is the Hebrew word *ma'al*. *Ma'al* also means to act treacherously.
 - a. *Ma'al* “carries the sense of affronting God’s holiness...or failing to accord him his due in worship” (ESV Study Bible note in **2 Chronicles 26:16-20**).
 - b. “The terrible consequences of *ma'al* include the loss of the Promised Land and the pain of exile” (ESV Study Bible note in **1 Chronicles 2:3-8**).
- d. Filled with pride, King Uzziah acted unfaithfully and treacherously toward God and entered the Holy Place to burn incense on the altar of incense.
 - i. It seems he was not content with his political, economic, and military power, but also thirsted for religious power.
 - I. He trampled on the Law of Moses.
 - a. He entered the Holy Place, a sin which was punishable by death (**Numbers 18:17**).
 - b. He attempted to burn incense on the altar of incense, which was also punishable by death (**Numbers 16:40**).
 - e. Azariah, the priest, and eighty other priests went in after him, and they withstood him, and reminded him of the grievous nature of his sin.
 - i. Rather than being honored by God through his activities, he was acting unfaithfully and treacherously towards God by disregarding his Law.
 - f. King Uzziah was filled with pride.
6. **Third, punishment. King Uzziah’s pride lead to punishment.**

26:19-23, “¹⁹ Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense. ²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the Lord had struck him. ²¹ And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king’s household, governing the people of the land. ²² Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz wrote. ²³ And Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, “He is a leper.” And Jotham his son reigned in his place.

 - a. King Uzziah, it seems, was given a chance to repent.
 - i. He had committed capital offenses, yet Azariah merely ordered him out of the sanctuary.
 - ii. Instead of coming to his senses and repenting, the scripture says Uzziah became angry.
 - I. He did not like being told what to do by God or by his priest, and he was consumed with anger.
 - b. He should have heeded the words of King Solomon, “¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (**Proverbs 16:18**).
 - c. King Uzziah’s pride, his haughty spirit, led to his undoing; he was severely punished by God.



- i. The instant he became angry with the priests, leprosy (dreaded skin disease) broke out on his forehead.
 - 1. As a result, he could no longer live in his palace; he had to live in isolation in a separate house (**26:21**).
 - 2. Being unclean, he was excluded from the house of the Lord; he could no longer worship God according to the Law (**26:21**).
 - 3. He lost his power, and his son Jotham became co-ruler (**26:21**).
 - 4. Upon his death, rather than being buried in the royal tombs in Jerusalem, he was buried in a field which belonged to the kings (**26:23**).
- d. King Uzziah's pride resulted in severe punishment; God inflicted him with leprosy, and he pretty much lost everything.

7. Conclusion

- a. Brothers, sisters, and friends, all of us have been blessed by God, in one way or another.
- b. There is a temptation to believe that we, rather than God, are the ultimate source of these blessings.
- c. When we think this way, we can be filled with pride.
- d. Our God-given power, prosperity, or popularity can lead to pride which will lead to punishment, either in this life or in the next.
 - i. In **Mark 7:14-23**, Jesus talks about what defiles a person. Notice what he says in **7:20-23**, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."
 - 1. Pride is indicative of a heart that is not right with God.
 - 2. Pride defiles a person.
 - 3. Pride, like murder, theft, and adultery has to be punished.
- e. Put away your pride and embrace humility.

8. Invitation

- a. In Christ Jesus, we have a model on how to do this. Paul writes in **Philippians 2:5-8**, "⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
 - i. If any human being ever had a reason to be proud, it was Jesus.
 - I. Christ Jesus was and is God.
 - a. Nothing we can do will ever remotely approach being God.
 - ii. Yet, Jesus humbled himself by being born in the likeness of men to face the cross for the sins of humanity.
 - 1. Because Jesus humbled himself, we ought to humble ourselves as well.
 - iii. Jesus was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
 - I. He went to the cross for you, and he went to the cross for me.



- b. If you are here this morning and you have not yet taken advantage of the sacrifice of Jesus, you now have an opportunity to do so.
 - i. Believe.
 - ii. Repent.
 - iii. Confess.
 - iv. Allow yourself to be immersed.
- c. If you are ready to obey the gospel this morning or you have a care you'd like to bring before the church, won't you please come forward as we stand and sing.
- d. Let us stand and sing.

