

2 Chronicles 25-27

Good beginnings and bad endings has been the overarching emphasis that we've picked up on as of late in our study of 2nd Chronicles. Over and over again we find kings who began well, but didn't finish that way. They got their eyes off of the Lord and with out exception disaster would be the result; warning, no repentance, judgment. I wish I could tell you that things would be different for Amaziah but unfortunately we see the pattern repeated in him. Of course some kings didn't even *begin* well but just had an overall ungodly reign. At least with a handful of them there were a few redeeming qualities along the way, but the problem is that the bible doesn't place the emphasis on how we begin, but upon how we end. When you watch a race every runner comes off the blocks strong, they all begin well, but they don't all finish well. And in the end it's how they finish that counts. So to with you and me, good beginnings are great, but good endings are greater. Because you can start well but then fizzle out along the way and never finish, how many times we see people come to Christ but a yr or 2 later no one knows where they are, or you discover they've returned to the ways of the world? and It's tragic, but these things were written for *our* admonishment, not so that we might sit here in our comfy chairs and go, "Boy those guys just didn't have their act together." But rather that we might take the warning to heart, learn from it and draw near to God lest we repeat the same pattern in our own lives.

Joash started so strong, crowned even at the age of 7. And as long as Jehoiada (the priest who raised him) was alive he did well. But when he was removed from the picture Joash didn't have the fortitude to follow through on doing what was right. He didn't seem to have a *personal* relationship with the Lord; he had what we referred to as a *peripheral* relationship with the Lord. His heart belonged to Jehoiada; he was loyal to *him* as a father, the man who raised him. But his heart didn't really belong to *Jehovah*, so he wasn't loyal to *Him* as his heavenly Father. And this is the danger of seeking to do right because of someone you respect, perhaps a parent or a friend but not cultivating a relationship with the Lord yourself. Because when that parent isn't around, or your friend isn't with you, you won't have the conviction to do the right thing, you'll want to do what you need to do to please the people you're around at that point. You become a man pleaser, and it will serve as a snare to you. Joash accommodated his leaders who desired idolatry, he had Zechariah (Jehoiada's own son) murdered for standing up to him, giving the word of God to him. And ultimately because he was a man pleaser and had forsaken the Lord, God brought judgment upon him, he was wounded in battle and while he was healing his own servants conspired against him and killed him on his bed because of what he'd done to Jehoiada's son. So good beginnings don't guarantee good endings, you've got to *abide* in Christ, maintain that close connection with Him, through prayer, the study of His Word, and fellowship with other believers.

So Joash has been killed, and the Amaziah his son reigned in his place.

So you see we're already seeing a chink in his armor. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, *but not with a loyal heart*. That is, "...but not with his whole heart." His heart wasn't completely dedicated and sold out to the Lord; there was a little room in there for compromise, or catering to other things. And when you leave room in your heart for compromise, you haven't purposed in your heart to be completely sold out "lock, stock, and barrel" to the Lord, it's not a matter of *if* you'll compromise, but only *when*. Because your heart is divided, you don't have a singleness of purpose in your heart to be pleasing to the Lord.

And you begin to drift into that category that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees of out Isaiah saying, "*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*" Matt 15:8 We might say that as a general rule he went through the right *motions* but not with the right *motives*. He did things right legally, but not necessarily lovingly, it's almost like he had a legal relationship rather than a love relationship with God. And so what we're seeing here is that actions alone aren't enough, obedience in and of itself isn't necessarily sufficient evidence of commitment to the Lord from the heart. There's a whole package that comes along with being committed to Christ. We mentioned *abiding* in Christ, we're talking about cultivating that love relationship through the things we mentioned; prayer, the study of the word of God, fellowship with the people of God, there's also the worship of God. How's your worship life? Do you spend time in worship and adoration of who God is? You see it's not just about going through the motions, it gets down in to the *motive* of my heart, is it love...or legalism? He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not truly from the heart, not with a loyal heart.

Vs3-4

Of course this is one of those areas whereby he did right in the sight of the Lord; he obeyed what the word of God said. And we commend him for this because it was the common practice to not only kill the people who murdered your dad, but you would execute the whole family and reach as far into their relation and friends as you could as well to safeguard a conspiracy from forming against you as well from some kids who grew up wanting revenge for the fact that you had their dad killed.

And it was right that he executed the men who conspired against his dad; that was lawful. But he didn't execute their kids for the word of God's sake. God's word says that the fathers aren't to be put to death for the sins of their children, nor shall the children be put to death for the sin of their fathers, each are to bear the responsibility for their own sin. And I think has application for us in our culture today whereby it seems like everyone is a victim and no one is responsible for their own actions. People do what they do because of the way they were raised, or because of something their dad did to them, or whatever. And I don't want to take away from the trauma of certain situations yet the bible is clear that we're accountable for our own personal choices. There's no justifying our own actions based upon the way our parents did things when we were kids.

We read in Ezekiel where the Lord said, “*What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge'? 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.'*” Ezek 18:2-4 You see they were seeking to justify and rationalize their actions based upon the actions of their parents, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Jr. is already doomed because of the way dad has lived his life, “...it’s not my fault, my dad was never there for me.” Or, “He never loved me.” “He was an alcoholic, that’s why I drink; he never taught me morals so I robbed a bank.” and On and on it goes, God says, “No, every soul will stand *individually* and *personally* responsible before Me for their choices, and the soul that sins shall die.” I don’t have to do something because that’s the way it was modeled to me, or because no one perhaps was there for me, I have a choice to make personally and I’ll be held accountable accordingly.

A couple of guys conspired to murder Joash and so Amaziah had them executed, but their kids didn’t have anything to do with that so he went against the grain of the culture, and the day and age in which he lived and obeyed the word of God instead.

And again we commend him for that because God calls us to go against the grain of the culture and day and age in which we live as well and it can be tough, but God honors our obedience.

Vs5-8

“The choice is up to you, you can be helped by God, or overthrown by God, He has the power to do both.” He can cause you to overcome, or *to be* overcome and it’s a simple matter of which side of the fence you want to be on, do you make your stand for Him or against Him? and Of course the determining factor in what makes your stand is found in the fact that you’re willing to comply with His way, or you’d rather do things your own way. Amaziah was preparing to go to war with Edom, and no doubt this made all kinds of practical sense, it was a good military maneuver. The problem is that it was spiritual compromise and was a bad move spiritually, you don’t join with the world in your battles as a believer. We’re to come out from among them and be separate says the Lord, *the Lord* is our strength and our salvation. You find these various groups today who promote Christian ideals but they’ll yoke up with anyone who’ll take a stand with them. They’ll stand with Mormons, J.W.’s, evangelicals, doesn’t really matter as long as we’re all willing to fight for the same cause. It does matter, “For the Lord is not with Israel...no matter how strong you are God will make you fall before your enemy.” We don’t want to form up as great of a force as we can and then ask God to bless it. We want to find ourselves in the flow of what God’s already blessing and make our stand there. And in this context we’re seeing the blessing that God ordains on non-compromise with the world to accomplish our agenda. We’re to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding, in all our ways acknowledge Him and trust Him to direct our paths. The prophet of God is challenging him to maintain the position of sanctification, not to yoke up with the northern kingdom here but to trust in the Lord.

Vs9

Underline that. You get the idea that Amaziah is saying, “Man if I really want to be obedient it’ll cost me significantly.” and The answer to that is, “Yes, it will.” (Luke Ch 14) Jesus taught us to count the cost of what it takes to be His disciple. But there are a couple of things to consider that come along with that. #1 Whatever obedience costs us, it’s always cheaper than the alternative disobedience, disobedience will always cost you or me much more than obedience will. And #2 **To help the king place things in their proper perspective the prophet reminds him that the Lord is able to give you much more than this. In other words God refuses to be a debtor to any man; you can not give something for the Lord but that the Lord won’t give back good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.** There’s no “out giving” God. Remember when the Lord was speaking of the difficulty in being rich and entering the kingdom of heaven? How it’s easier for a camel to fit through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter into heaven. And the disciples were all, “Lord, who then can be saved?” and Jesus said with man it’s impossible, but with God all things are possible. And Peter was all, “Lord look, we’ve left all to follow You.” and Jesus said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.*” Luke 18:29-30 **So whatever your obedience costs you, the Lord able to give you much more than this.**

Vs10-13

Since they couldn’t share in the spoils of war they decided to get their own from Judah, so they raided and plundered the cities accordingly on their way home – killed 3,000 people. They returned home in great anger and took their aggression out on the people of Judah. The bible says, “*An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression.*” Prov 29:22

And again, “*Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul.*” Prov 22:24-25 **God had honored Amaziah’s obedience in granting him a great victory, but these guys were ticked off and so they just made havoc on their way home raiding and plundering all these cities on the way home.**

And we at 1st we kind of think... “Well, he did what You advised Lord so how could this happen? Why all this destruction and devastation in Judah?” and The answer is simple, it’s because the mercenaries from Israel never should’ve been there in the 1st place. He may’ve done the right thing but that doesn’t negate the fact that he’d made a wrong decision in having them there in the 1st place. So you may commit a crime, ask God for forgiveness and be restored before the Lord, but you’re still going to jail because you’ll reap what you’ve sown. God was with him in overthrowing his enemies, but the fallout for even having brought these guys into his territory was devastating. That’s why it’s better to think things through in advance instead of living on the fly figuring you’ll deal with things as they come up. Had he thought this through it would’ve avoided all this.

But instead he turned to the world instead of the Lord to help him fight his battles and because of that he'd already made some serious decisions prior to the Lord intervening that would bring ramifications along with them. It was God's mercy that kept things from going much worse by intervening when He did rather than letting him go his own way. Had he went to war with Israel no telling how many thousands would've died and how deep the devastation into the kingdom would've run.

Vs14-16

We spoke in the beginning of Amaziah doing what was right in the sight of the Lord but that he didn't have a loyal heart. Now we're seeing the fruit of that fact, once God got him out of a pinch he went about doing things his way. And it seems so obvious, why would you serve gods that couldn't deliver your enemy? I mean, you destroy them, then take their little wooden trinkets and start bowing down to them, what in the world is going on there? In Isaiah 44 it speaks of taking these blocks of wood, tossing ½ of it in the fire so you can eat, and carving the other ½ into some idol to bow before, it's like bowing down before ashes. It can't deliver your soul. But it can cater to your flesh and it seems to me that that's the bottom line. It's so alluring, so tempting to bow before those things that cater to the flesh, and in the worship of these pagan gods you could pretty much do whatever perverse practice your wicked heart desired and call it "worship." Amaziah got what he needed from God and then turned away. Perhaps he was mad at God because he'd done what He said but Judah still suffered from the Israeli mercenaries. Not stopping to consider that it was his plan to bring them along, not God's. But once again God sent to him in the person of the prophet, sought to speak some sense into him, to lead him to repentance, but he just rebuked the prophet, threatened to have him killed if he didn't pipe down. So the prophet in essence told him that since he didn't want to hear from the Lord, the Lord was going to wipe him out. Dangerous ground to start treading on when you don't want to hear the word of the Lord but just want to be left alone to do your own thing.

Vs17-19

Probably spurred on by the damage the mercenaries did on their way out of town Amaziah sends word to the northern kingdom of Israel that they need to settle this thing. And so Joash (not the Joash of Judah, this is the king of Israel in the north) says, "Listen, you're like a little thistle trying to stand before a giant majestic cedar, stay home and stay safe. I know you think that you whipped up on Edom so you're ready to take on the world, but you're only messing with me to your own hurt." It's that, "Go away kid...ya bother me," kind of a mentality.

But Vs 19 poses a significant question, why meddle with trouble, that you should fall? How many times we wind up stumbling, or falling simply because we're meddling with trouble? Placing ourselves where we ought not be, hanging with people we shouldn't be hanging with, we have this sense of strength and invincibility about ourselves, "I can handle it," but you can't mess with fire with out eventually getting burned, it's just a fact. Listen, don't meddle with trouble that you should fall, you and Judah with you.

In other words when you go down, others will get hurt along the way, think it through, do the right thing, stay away from trouble, tempting circumstances or situations.

Vs 20-28

Few things we need to see real quick and we'll pick up the pace. What was the fallout of Amaziah's meddling with trouble? #1 Vs 22 He was defeated and the nation was disgraced, every man fled to his tent. When you meddle in places you don't belong, you'll find it'll ultimately only bring disgrace, shame both to you and your relationship with the Lord, sin will always bring shame. #2 Vs23 Judah's defenses were broken down, Amaziah was captured (which sin will ensnare you) then a significant chunk of the wall of Jerusalem was broken down. When you meddle with trouble, find yourself in situations you ought not be in, your defenses will be broken down. Because the problem with a "little" sin is that it never stays little, it gets a little more and a little more until eventually our defense is broken down entirely. #3 In Vs 24 Amaziah's sin diminished worship, the temple was broken into and all the treasures of the house of the Lord used in the worship experience were now taken. When you're meddling with sin it strips your worship experience radically, you won't worship with the same intensity, or consistency as you once did. #4 We see his meddling destroy Judah's freedom there in Vs 24 as well as hostages were taken back to Samaria. In Christ we've been set free, but we're not free *to* sin, we're free *from* sin, as we noted with Amaziah in Vs 23 sin will ensnare, enslave you, make a hostage of you. And it appears that he was a p.o.w. until the king of Israel died but he wasn't safe when he was released because the result of him turning from the Lord was another conspiracy much like the one that his dad was put to death by and though he tried to flee he was found and put to death which is the final note. Having turned from the Lord, meddling in sin the 5th and final result...death, the wages of sin is death. Disgrace, broken down defenses, diminished worship, destroyed freedom, and death. Why should you meddle with trouble, that you should fall?

Ch26

Vs1-5

You see this is the pattern, seek the Lord and He will bless you, turn from Him and He will buffet you. And Uzziah came to the throne under some difficult circumstances. The nation had been devastated by war, the walls broken down, the palace and the temple emptied of their treasures, hostages having been taken from the land. Yet as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. And this is a repeated theme throughout the scriptures, seek the Lord, love *on* the Lord, walk with the Lord and He'll bless your life in unimaginable, unbelievable ways. Walk away from the Lord, or begin to trust in your own strength and you'll reap the harvest of that as well. W/all these examples displayed for us in scripture I find myself thinking, "When will we ever learn." Over and over and over again God shows us the error of our own ways yet we just never seem to get it, God help us.

Vs6-15

So we see God prospering him in manifold ways, victory over his enemies, he was blessed in his understanding and agricultural ability, and in his development of innovative and effective weaponry.

And as you and I seek the Lord I believe God will bless us in like manner. He'll grant you victory in times of difficulty, He'll cause you to be fruitful to His glory, and you'll become skilled in the resources of spiritual weaponry, putting on the whole armor of God. Utilizing the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the helmet of salvation, the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, prepared in season and out, having in your left hand the shield of faith and in your right the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. As we walk with the Lord, He'll give us victory over the enemy, make us fruitful to His glory, and teach us to be effective with our spiritual weaponry.

The problem with Uzziah is that he seemed to handle pressure better than power, insignificance (if you will) better than fame. He was marvelously helped, "Until he became strong." His downfall was in his fame, he believed his own press reports, the people's eyes were on him, and he didn't seem to deflect that attention and adoration to the Lord. Isaiah (who was on the scene at this time) tells us that it wasn't until the year king Uzziah died that he saw the Lord high and lifted up, seated upon the throne. Prior to that he was under the misguided notion that Uzziah was the man, the king on the throne. Uzziah wasn't the king on the throne, the Lord is on the throne. And God wants us to see that and so often times the "Uzziahs" of our lives will die before us so that we're able to see the Lord on the throne. Oh not literally perhaps, but if you look to a particular pastor, or church leader, you allow someone to block your "vision" of the Lord (like holding your thumb up to the sun), depending upon your husband or your wife to be your source of strength and security. Then invariably something will happen that will disappoint, discourage, or disillusion you with regard to them because God wants your focus on *Him*, not on them. God is the One on the throne, He's the only One who will never disappoint, discourage, or disillusion you, He totally satisfies and brings stability. Uzziah's downfall was in his fame, his pride.

Vs16-18

You might be a king, or you might be a priest, but you would never be both, that office was reserved for Jesus Christ the King of kings, our faithful high priest. Uzziah got to thinking that since he was the king he could do whatever he wanted, after all he was so great, so famous. So (like Saul) he thought he'd perform the duties of a priest, burn incense to the Lord. 80 priests confronted him, told him God wouldn't honor it. What does it speak of when you've been confronted by 80 different people yet you persist in your own way being wise in your own eyes?

Vs19-20

You see God gave him the chance to humble himself and get out, but he became furious, started blowing his top, probably veins popping out of his forehead and all.

And then he probably figured something was up when the countenance on all the priest's faces suddenly changed. There they were shocked and horrified at what they saw, he wouldn't listen to their rebuke, now God is taking matters into His own hands. And leprosy in scripture is always typical of sin, numbing, desensitizing, decays you and destroys you. They grabbed hold of him and got him out quick, and he was ready to go at that point, there are no exceptions to the word of God.

Vs21-23

So he entered the temple an arrogant king, got in a quarrel there at church and left a humbled leper, his sin cost him for the rest of his life. Generally speaking he was a good king, did the right thing, but in the end the summation was basically, "He was a leper." Didn't finish well. I'm not saying his salvation was taken but this one thing tainted his entire life. Again think things through before you do them, none of us are above the Word of God. A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.

Ch 27

Quickly.

Vs 1-2

Now dad's this isn't a with out exception principle we see (obviously) and each individual is responsible for their own choice, but it's not uncommon to see the kids of the kings reign in the ways of their father before them. The point being that we're to realize the incredible influence that a dad can have in the lives of his kids and we're to wield it wisely.

Now the fact that he didn't enter the temple some see as a positive thing, others see as a negative thing. Some say that he avoided the temple because of what happened to his dad, but because of that his son grew up with out that influence and so we have a wicked ruler next. Others say he avoided the temple unlike his father in that he didn't repeat the same mistake so it was a good thing. I can see it both ways, I'll leave that for you to study through and decide.

Vs3-6

What was the secret of his strength? He prepared his ways before the Lord, that is he established his ways in the presence of the Lord. He was open to the Lord, wanted to be right with the Lord, so God strengthened him in his resolve and honored his reign with victory over his enemies and safety and security in the land.

Vs7-9

So though his reign was relatively brief it's refreshing to hear nothing negative in that he began well, and seemed to finish strong as well. And that's our desire, to start well, run well, and finish well, so that by our life or by our death that Christ might be magnified in our body.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your Word. And I pray God that You might help us to run with endurance this race that's set before us, that we might finish well, that you might be magnified in our bodies whether by life, or by death. Keep us clear from trouble, that we not meddle with trouble to our own hurt, nor be lifted up by pride. But may we just walk in humility before You, clinging desperately to You, doing what's right in your sight, from the heart.