

We have been in a series called, *“Pursuing Wisdom.”*

Go ahead and open your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 25.

The title of this morning’s sermon is, *“Wisdom Needed to Finish Well – Part III.”*

We’ve been looking at examples of kings who started well but finished poorly, and we’ll look at our last king this morning.

The previous examples are still on your handout...

Lesson 1: These kings reveal it’s hard to finish well: (example 1) Solomon (example 2) Saul (example 3) Hezekiah (example 4) Asa (example 5) Joash (example 6) Uzziah

And our last king...

Lesson 1: These kings reveal it’s hard to finish well: (example 7) Amaziah

2 Chronicles 25:1 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, 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 eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.

Amaziah is a picture of half-hearted devotion. The problem with half of your heart being devoted to God is the other half can be devoted to something else. We will see this play out in his life.

Let me remind you about something from last Sunday’s sermon so the following verses make sense...

Amaziah’s father was Joash. He was the king who was raised in the temple as a child. When he got older he turned from the Lord. Zechariah, who was like a brother to him because they grew up together, rebuked him, and Joash murdered him.

Some of Joash’s people were so disgusted with him they murdered him. Now Amaziah needs to deal with the men who murdered his father...

2 Chronicles 25:3 And as soon as the royal power was firmly his, he killed his servants who had struck down the king his father. 4 But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, “Fathers shall not die because of their children, nor children die because of their fathers, but each one shall die for his own sin.”

The standard practice in the Old Testament involved executing the children too to prevent them from later taking revenge. God strictly forbid that though and to Amaziah’s credit he obeyed.

Now he wants to organize his army for battle...

2 Chronicles 25:5 Then Amaziah assembled the men of Judah and set them by fathers' houses under commanders of thousands and of hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upward, and found that they were 300,000 choice men, fit for war, able to handle spear and shield. 6 He hired also 100,000 mighty men of valor from Israel for 100 talents of silver.

Amaziah decided he needed an additional 100,000 soldiers, or mercenaries, and he hired them from the northern kingdom of Israel for about 7,500 pounds of silver. Quite a bit of money!

But something happened...

2 Chronicles 25:7 But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel, with all these Ephraimites. 8 But go, act, be strong for the battle. Why should you suppose that God will cast you down before the enemy? For God has power to help or to cast down."

Ephraim was the largest tribe in the northern kingdom of Israel, so sometimes it was called Ephraim.

A prophet told Amaziah he shouldn't take the Israelite mercenaries with them, and you can see why in the words **the Lord is not with Israel**. The northern kingdom of Israel was an apostate nation that turned from God, so God didn't want the southern kingdom of Judah working with them.

It could look like Judah would be stronger if they had the Israelite mercenaries w/ them, but they would actually be weaker because their real strength came from God...not the number of mercenaries they hired.

It's better to have less and do things right w/ God's help, then have more, but do things wrong w/o God's help.

And look at the end of the verse...

For God has power to help or to cast down.

God wants His people depending on Him so He's shown to be the One who helped.

There's application for us in the New Testament...

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

If we've got the opportunity to accomplish something with ungodly people, it might look like we're increasing our chances of success, but w/o God we're setting ourselves up for failure.

Amaziah can send these mercenaries home but he is going to be out 7,500 pounds of silver. Look what he says...

2 Chronicles 25:9 And Amaziah said to the man of God, “But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?” The man of God answered, “The Lord is able to give you much more than this.”

His immediate concern was the money he would lose. This verse gives us a window into Amaziah's halfhearted devotion to God. Understandably this was a large amount, but if he was wholeheartedly devoted to God it would've seemed like a small amount to him.

We might be quick to judge Amaziah, but I remember feeling this way after I became a Christian and I had to throw out a lot of compromising things I had, such as movies, music, and clothing...and sadly my concern was, “I paid so much for all this.”

I try to give you resources to put in your toolbox for counseling others, and yourself, and we reached a powerful one. This verse contains a wonderful financial truth, and it brings us to lesson two...

Lesson 2: wise people trust God with their finances.

The prophet told Amaziah that God was able to give him much more than he would lose. You might circle or highlight his words. If you're ever tempted to compromise with money, go to this verse.

I have used this during counseling to encourage people to do what's right with their finances and leave them in God's hands.

Don't worry about the money; God isn't broke. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. When you honor God with your money he can honor you in return.

What does this look like practically?

Let's say you're at work and you've got the opportunity to make more money, but it involves something immoral, such as:

- Being deceitful...
- Shortchanging someone
- Stepping on others to make progress...

You might be tempted to say:

- *I've already invested so much...*
- *There have been all these expenses...*
- *We created this partnership...*
- *What will they think of me...*

It would be better to suffer the financial loss and trust God.

Maybe you will:

- Lose money
- Lose friends
- Lose your job
- Lose a relationship w/ a child...or a spouse could leave you.
- In some countries, missionaries and Christians obey God and lose their lives.

But it means being in a better place b/c it means being in God's will.

To Amaziah's credit look what he did...

2 Chronicles 25:10 Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim to go home again. And they became very angry with Judah and returned home in fierce anger.

These mercenaries were probably angry because:

1. First, they were insulted at being hired and then sent home like there was something wrong w/ them. Maybe they found out the reason and didn't like that the God of the southern kingdom of Judah thought so poorly of them.
2. Second, they were counting on the plunder and spoil from the battle.

Amaziah went out to battle without them and God gave him the victory...

2 Chronicles 25:11 But Amaziah took courage and led out his people and went to the Valley of Salt and struck down 10,000 men of Seir. 12 The men of Judah captured another 10,000 alive and took them to the top of a rock and threw them down from the top of the rock, and they were all dashed to pieces.

This was a common form of execution among pagan nations. Even though we're not told it was wrong, Amaziah didn't have any business treating his enemies like pagan nations did.

2 Chronicles 25:13 But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, raided the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon, and struck down 3,000 people in them and took much spoil.

So the mercenaries did to Judah what they would have done to the Edomites if Amaziah had let them go w/ them to battle: they raided cities, killed 3,000 people, and took much spoil.

You can see why God didn't want Amaziah working w/ them: they were ungodly.

This introduces an interesting situation for us to learn from...

Amaziah obeyed the prophet, sent the mercenaries home, but they trashed his nation on the way...and this brings us to lesson 3...

Lesson 3: prosperity and suffering are not always evidence of obedience.

Do you remember when Asa disobeyed God by turning to Syria for help? He ended up experiencing a great victory. I told you that just because people prosper doesn't mean they've been obedient.

The situation with Amaziah shows the other side: just because people suffer doesn't mean they've been disobedient.

- We tend to think obeying God means good things will happen...but sometimes bad things happen.
- We tend to think disobeying God means bad things happen...but sometimes good things happen.

The point is the evidence of obedience is not whether we suffer or prosper. The evidence is whether our actions line up with God's Word.

But here's what's interesting w/ Amaziah...

It's equally true to say he suffered because he disobeyed God. If he hadn't hired these mercenaries in the first place none of this would've happened.

Typically, if we obey before we rush into disobedience we can avoid a great deal of trouble. But if we disobey and then repent there are often painful consequences. In other words, it's easier to obey in the first place than to disobey, repent, and deal w/ the outcome.

Now watch Amaziah do something unbelievably foolish...

2 Chronicles 25:14 After Amaziah came from striking down the Edomites, he brought the gods of the men of Seir and set them up as his gods and worshiped them, making offerings to them. 15 Therefore the Lord was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of a people who did not deliver their own people from your hand?"

The Scottish minister Andrew Bonar said, *"Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle."*

You could even argue that we have to be more watchful after the victory than before, because we typically depend on the Lord before the battle and are less likely to do so after experiencing victory.

Amaziah was definitely a much better king before the battle than after.

God gave Amaziah:

- A great victory...
- Over a strong enemy...
- In a difficult place

Sadly he responded to God's goodness by turning to idolatry.

The prophet asked a very reasonable question: *"Why would you worship the false gods of the people that couldn't even deliver them when you attacked them?"*

But as terrible as Amaziah's actions were, I think there's a way we can do this...

We see sins in other people's lives and then introduce them into our lives. How many of us have seen sin cause people problems and then commit the same sin ourselves?

Lying, anger, bitterness, alcohol, pornography, unforgiveness, covetousness, all ruin lives, marriages, and families, but we allow these sins in our lives thinking they won't cause us the same problems.

What God said to Amaziah through the prophet is exactly what He could say to us: *"These sins didn't help the people who committed them, why would you let them in your life?"*

When Amaziah took these idols it was a symptom of something that happened to him after his victory...

He became very proud!

We talked recently about how success can be dangerous because it can lead to pride. Sometimes it's God's grace that we're not more successful.

Josephus was a first century Jewish historian who provided some of the most important writings on the history of the Jews. He said...

"Upon the victory which Amaziah had gotten, and the great acts he had done, he was puffed up, and began to overlook God, who had given him the victory."

And this brings us to lesson 4...

Lesson 4: pride blinds us to (part 1) correction.

Look how Amaziah responded to the prophet who confronted him...

2 Chronicles 25:16 But as he was speaking, the king said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?" So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."

Amaziah said, *"Who put you in charge? Be quiet before I kill you!"* The prophet was brave b/c he still told Amaziah God was going to judge him.

Amaziah thought he was silencing the prophet, but since the prophet was speaking for God, it was really like he was silencing God.

The same is true in our lives...

When people share God's Word with us, but we try to silence them, it's like we're trying to silence God.

Last week we talked about **Proverbs 16:18**, which says, **"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."**

Amaziah's pride led to his destruction and fall.

There are many verses about the dangers of failing to respond well to correction:

- **Proverbs 13:18 Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.**
- **Proverbs 15:10 There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.**
- **Proverbs 29:1 He who is often reprovved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.**

One of the best remedies for pride is listening to people's correction, not making excuses, not blaming others...and then saying, *"Thank you for telling me. I'm sorry. Please forgive me."*

It does wonders for our flesh and strengthening our spirit.

Amaziah is the seventh example we've looked at and it's worth noticing that most of these kings - think about Asa, Joash, Uzziah, and now Amaziah - were rebuked but failed to respond well because of their pride. This is directly related to them finishing poorly.

God graciously reached out to them, but their pride kept them on the same course.

Something else we can learn from Amaziah is that one of the problems with pride is it spills over into other areas of our lives. Rarely can we be prideful in one area without it affecting another area.

Watch this be the case with Amaziah...

2 Chronicles 25:17 Then Amaziah king of Judah took counsel and sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." 18 And Joash the king of Israel sent word to Amaziah king of Judah, "A thistle on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife,' and a wild beast of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thistle. 19 You say, 'See, I have struck down Edom,' and your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness. But now stay at home. Why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?"

One reason Kings and Chronicles can be confusing is kings of the northern and southern kingdoms had the same names:

- Last week we read about Joash, but that was Joash the king of Judah and father of Amaziah.
- Now we are reading about Joash the king of Israel.

Don't mix them up!

You see Amaziah's pride spilling over...

Since Amaziah defeated the Edomites, he thought he could defeat Israel as well. The problem is he didn't really defeat the Edomites. God defeated the Edomites, but Amaziah's pride caused him to think he did it.

Now he thinks he can go against Israel...and this brings us to the next part of Lesson 4...

Lesson 4: pride blinds us to (part 2) reality.

There are probably two reasons Amaziah wanted to fight Israel:

1. First, the mercenaries that tore up his nation were from Israel.
2. Second, he attempted a marriage alliance w/ Joash – Joash quoted him, **“Give your daughter to my son as wife”** – but Joash denied him.

This shows Amaziah thought they were equals, but Joash didn't see it that way. Amaziah clearly overestimated himself.

Joash's analogy is pretty entertaining:

- A **thistle** – representing Amaziah – is an irritating and worthless plant
- A **cedar** – representing Joash – is a strong and powerful tree

Joash warned Amaziah he was going to be trampled.

This is one of those interesting times in Scripture when an unbeliever rebuked one of God's people. Joash was evil but even he could see Amaziah's pride. It's like Joash said, *“You're excited about your victory, but stop while you're ahead.”*

The main thing I want you to notice is Amaziah was blind to the reality of the situation:

- He thought he was a cedar, but he was only a thistle.
- He thought he could marry Joash's daughter...it's like she's a 10 but he's only a 5.
- He thought he could defeat Joash in battle...it's like Joash is a star, but Amaziah is only a flashlight.

One of the problems with pride is it prevents us from seeing ourselves accurately. Warren Wiersbe said, *“Pride blinds the mind, distorts the vision, and so inflates the ego that the person can't tell truth from fiction.”*

Look at the next verse...

2 Chronicles 25:20 But Amaziah would not listen, for it was of God, in order that he might give them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought the gods of Edom.

The prophet's last words to Amaziah were that God would destroy him, but in a sense God allowed Amaziah to destroy himself.

In an odd twist of fate, Amaziah defeated the Edomites, but then the Edomites defeated Amaziah when he started worshiping their idols.

The next few verses describe all the terrible things Amaziah suffered. As we read these verses, keep in mind this is what his pride caused him.

Look at verse 21...

2 Chronicles 25:21 So Joash king of Israel went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. 22 And Judah (or Amaziah) was defeated by Israel (or Joash), and every man fled to his home. 23 And Joash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem for 400 cubits, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. 24 And he seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God, in the care of Obed-edom. He seized also the treasuries of the king's house, also hostages, and he returned to Samaria.

Consider how far Amaziah's fallen: he went from being a victor over the Edomites to a captive of the Israelites:

- He was forced into bondage.
- He was forced to see his city's defenses weakened leaving everyone vulnerable
- He was forced to see his people become captives
- He was forced to see his nation's wealth taken from the temple and his own palace

And it gets worse...

2 Chronicles 25:25 Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. 26 Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, from first to last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? 27 From the time when he turned away from the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish and put him to death there. 28 And they brought him upon horses, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David.

Amaziah's war w/ Israel was so disastrous and humiliating he lost the support and respect of his people. They turned against him b/c:

- Their city was destroyed

- Their wealth was taken...
- And a foreign king captured their friends and family

Amaziah could no longer find safety in Jerusalem so he fled to Lachish, but they followed him there and killed him.

Just like Amaziah's father Joash was murdered by his own people the same thing happened to him.

His pride – literally – ruined his life. He stands as one of the strongest warnings of the danger of it in Scripture.

This is the last king who failed to apply wisdom and finish well.

Let me close – not just this sermon, but this brief series on finishing well – by getting you to look back at the end of verse nine...

2 Chronicles 25:9 And Amaziah said to the man of God, “But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?” The man of God answered, “The Lord is able to give you much more than this.”

Now let me ask you something...

Are you okay w/ what the prophet said?

Just to be honest with you, I'm not. It looks like the prophet told Amaziah to give up the money b/c of how much God could give him.

I didn't like that, b/c God doesn't want us doing what's right just because we think will get more in the end, right? He wants us doing what's right...because it's the right thing to do...whether we get anything out of it or not.

In fact – like we talked about earlier – maybe we do what's right and suffer.

But what's interesting is what the prophet says to Amaziah in this verse is what God communicates to us elsewhere in Scripture

What I mean is, God asks a lot, but He offers us more in return...

Luke 9:23 [Jesus] said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

This is asking a lot, isn't it? Amaziah had to give up some money. We're supposed to give up our lives!

But God entices us by telling us how much is in store for us if we're willing to do so:

- **1 Corinthians 2:9** As it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”
- **Ephesians 3:20** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

It's like God says, “Sacrifice for me. Give up what you need to give up. I'm able to give you much more than this.”

I wanted to conclude w/ this, b/c wisdom is applying the knowledge we have, and keeping this knowledge in mind is one of the best ways to finish well.

Let's pray.