

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem. He did right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him.

Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the corner buttress and fortified them. He built towers in the wilderness and hewed many cisterns, for he had much livestock, both in the lowland and in the plain. He also had plowmen and vinedressers in the hill country and the fertile fields, for he loved the soil. Moreover, Uzziah had an army ready for battle, which entered combat by divisions according to the number of their muster, prepared by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the official, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's officers.

But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

2 Chronicles 26:3-5,9-11,16

The Right Path



Fifty-two years was really quite a long time for a king to rule in his day, and Uzziah did a lot of good things for Judah during his reign. But as so often happens, to the successful comes pride—and to the prideful comes the fall.

Like King Saul before him, King Uzziah thought so much of himself that he believed he could even take over the duties of God's priests in the temple. But his story goes on to describe how, before he made it out of the temple that day, the Lord struck him with leprosy, as a permanent sign of his disobedience.

They opposed Uzziah the king 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 been unfaithful and will have no honor from the Lord God." But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense.

King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 26:18-19,21a

A Narrow Escape

When we purchased our current property, sixteen years ago, it came, at no extra charge, complete with a delightful, companionable, outdoor cat we named Mamma. One morning, as I let Mamma out of the

garage, I noticed that a pair of wood ducks were out on the pond. Always preferring fresh breakfast over dried, Mamma immediately trotted on down to the pond to try her hand at fresh duck.

Here was the classic conflict for someone who loves all animals: Does one root for the predator or the prey? Though I was more intimately acquainted with Mamma, and accepted her primal instincts, I hoped the ducks would not do anything stupid that would result in at least one of them becoming feline breakfast.

I knew the ducks would be safe so long as they stayed in the water. When they paddled toward the middle I breathed a sigh of relief. But then, apparently feeling cocky, they continued on, reached the opposite shore, and climbed out onto the dike!

Well, Mamma may have been many things, but she was not stupid. As the ducks clambered up the rise, she silently crept along the shoreline, below the ducks' vision, taking her position of attack down by the water. The ducks had not only foolishly left the safety of the water, but they had actually turned their backs on Mamma as she began slowly creeping up the bank.

Watching from the sun room I realized that the ducks had one chance. Near the top of the dike was a border of dried leaves; as soon as Mamma stepped into them she would lose the element of surprise. Sure enough, as she made her final leap toward the pair, her feet noisily disturbed the dried leaves and the ducks escaped—minus only a feather or two. If they had just stayed smart, and stayed where there was safety in the middle of the pond, they could have saved themselves a lot of grief.

And if King Uzziah had just stayed smart, and stayed obedient to the Lord, he wouldn't have ended up with leprosy.

A Predisposition for the Unholy

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he

is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

It is a frustrating paradox for the believer. As new creations we are spiritually set apart from this world. We carry around within us the Holy Spirit, given as earnest for the promises yet to be fulfilled. Our spirit unites with the Spirit, communing upon this heavenly umbilical with God the Father. We are different. We are changed.

Yet we are still wrapped in this damnable flesh—this clammy, woolen legacy of our fallen nature. Our feet still tread earth's soil. Though sanctified, we are still susceptible to the siren song of the evil one. Though redeemed, we may still step onto an unholy path.

And step we do, for until that glorious Day of the Lord's return, man will remain with a predisposition for the unholy. So long as we walk this soil, righteousness will have to be learned, but sin will be our natural bent.

*Wash out its stains, refine its dross,
Nail my affections to the Cross;
Hallow each thought; let all within
Be clean, as Thou, my Lord, art clean!*

*If in this darksome wild I stray,
Be Thou my Light, be Thou my Way;
No foes, no violence I fear,
No fraud, while Thou, my God, art near.*

Nicolaus Ludwig Von Zinzendorf

Consequences

In the blood of Christ the believer need not fear that an unwise pursuit will result in banishment from His presence. The indwelling Spirit is our pledge of that eternal promise. But that is not to say that we may not come off our misguided path bearing the fresh and painful scars of our rebellion.

As a result of their carelessness, those wood ducks lost a few tail feathers. As a result of his callous disregard for God's laws, King Uzziah was afflicted with leprosy for the rest of his life. Our sins, though forgiven, may inflict upon us myriad unwelcome consequences.

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Hebrews 12:9-11

God the Father teaches us obedience through the consequences of our disobedience. How many scars have we acquired by veering off the wise path of His holiness? How much unhappiness have we brought upon ourselves by straying from His will? What will it take for us to stay on the right path?

*Shadows around me,
Shadows above me,
Never conceal
My Saviour and Guide;
He is the Light,
In Him is no darkness;
Ever I'm walking
Close to His side.*

H.J. Zelle

