

Why Your Strength Might Be Hindering God's Blessing in Your Life

From the world's perspective, strength is a universally and undisputedly positive quality. It's is admired in every realm of life—from the successful business leader to the Olympic athlete. And it brings with it the utmost honor and prestige.

Yet, when it comes to our spiritual health and fruitfulness, strength can very quickly become our greatest enemy. Whether you are a pastor, business leader, father, mother or young person, no one is immune from the natural tendency to rely on our own strength. Rather than humble dependence on God, we choose to rely on our own wisdom, or previous success, or mere resilience in the face of adversity.

But God's word reminds us all that we must stay weak. If we choose to forsake His way in this, we do so to our own destruction.

A Royal Example

It was said of the leadership of King Uzziah, the tenth king of Judah, "the Southern Kingdom was raised to a condition of prosperity that it had not known since the death of Solomon." Uzziah became king at 16 years of age after the assassination of his father. The Bible recounts, "And he did what was correct in the eyes of the Lord as everything his father Amaziah had done" (2 Chron. 26:4). As a result, "God brought him aid" (26:7) against Judah's strong enemy armies and "his name spread even to the border of Egypt because he became quite powerful" (26:8). His army grew to 300,750 troops who "were able to go to battle as a strong army and to help the king against his enemies" (26:13). "And his name went out for a great distance. He received great help until he was even

more powerful" (26:15).

Becoming Strong

Notice that last phrase again; God helped him "until he was even more powerful." Now look at the next statement in the biblical account: "And as he grew strong, his heart grew more proud, leading to his destruction. Then he acted unfaithfully against the Lord his God" (26:16a). Clearly, Uzziah's power and achievements went to his head. He noticed that the pagan kings of Egypt enjoyed both the royal and the priestly functions. Uzziah, dissatisfied with royal power, now wanted divine power like the other kings of the other religions. However, Egypt's gods were not the same as the Holy One of Israel, who required that only the consecrated priests offer up the incense in the temple service. Still, Uzziah entered the temple to burn the priestly incense with complete disregard for God's standards.

The Bible tells us that "Azariah the priest ... [with] eighty priests of the Lord—men of valor" (26:17b). They confronted Uzziah, saying, "Leave from the sanctuary because you have been unfaithful, and there will be no honor for you from the Lord God" (26:18b). Angered by their resistance and undaunted by their words, the king proceeded in his headstrong disregard for things holy. Immediately, he was stricken with leprosy and left the temple to live the rest of his life in shame as a lonely leper.

4 Signs That You Are Too Strong

As we review Uzziah's gracious rise to prominence and his tragic forfeiture of God's blessing, what can we learn? I see four lessons:

Loss of godly counsel: 2 Chronicles 26:5 tells us one of the secrets of Uzziah's success: He sought after God in the days of Zechariah, the one who instructed him in the fear of the Lord. And in the days that he sought after the Lord, God

caused him to succeed.” Uzziah enjoyed the godly counsel of a prophet who instructed him in the fear of the Lord. Somewhere along the line, it appears that Zechariah died, and Uzziah took a tragic turn to pride and self-will. Like Uzziah, we all need to pursue and accept the godly counsel of wise mentors during the course of our entire life. We never get beyond the blessing of courageous, biblical wisdom. If we do, we fail. Who are the “Zechariahs” in your life today? How often do you seek their advice? Do you comply?

Lack of accountability: Uzziah’s selfish aspirations soon overpowered his spiritual accountability. He even rebuffed the warnings of 81 godly priests. Power and fame can have that impact on people. They begin to believe they can “break the rules” and get away with it. Learn from Uzziah. No one ever gets so successful, famous, or powerful that he can play “fast and loose” with God’s holiness and get away with it. How willing are you to submit to godly counsel when it goes against what you want or think you deserve?

Love for perceived privileges: Psalm 62:10b warns, “If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” Like seawater, power and affluence demand that you keep drinking more, to your own eventual demise. Uzziah could not be content with life in Judah; he wanted what other kings had. Truly, there is always someone out there with more prominence, possessions, talent or toys. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). Discontent can undermine our godliness and our welfare when we seek privilege over piety. Has God blessed you with more than you deserve? Cherish these blessings humbly. Hold them loosely. Never compare or aspire for more than God grants or wills for you.

Lethargy toward the holiness of God – Ultimately, it seems Uzziah’s success became his idol, completely eclipsing his grasp of the holiness of God. He became more interested in exercising his royal rights than doing what was right in the sight of a holy God.

Uzziah's success disintegrated in an instant. Fame was replaced by shame. His successful reign as king was permanently corrupted by his ruin.

Yet, God's holiness remained. This is underscored by the riveting account of Isaiah 6:1-8. You've read it before. With the context fresh on your mind, read it again, carefully please...

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. One cried to another and said:

*"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts;
the whole earth is full of His glory."*

The posts of the door moved at the voice of him who cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar in his hand. And he laid it on my mouth, and said, "This has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."

Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Then I said, "Here am I. Send me."

At the root of our self-destructive, self-reliance is the disregard for a holy God. Uzziah hardened his heart toward holiness. Isaiah humbled his heart before God's holiness. Uzziah chose calamity. Isaiah received cleansing. Uzziah

experienced a fall. Isaiah received a call.

God is holy. Now the choice is yours. Stay weak.

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