

Holiness and Humility

Matt Chandler – August 17, 2014

Well, how are we? Doing well? Second Chronicles 26, if you'll go ahead and get out your Bible and find that one. If you're a guest with us this morning, there should be a hardback black Bible somewhere around you. If you don't own a Bible, that's our gift to you.

While you're turning there, this morning over in Fort Worth, at our Fort Worth Campus, Anthony Moore begins this morning as our new Fort Worth campus pastor. So this is Anthony and his family. Just a beautiful family there. Anthony joins our central elder board. Man, if I had the space this morning to unpack for you how God brought this all about... I found myself last night even as I prayed and got ready to preach this Word this morning and really last night just having my heart really stirred at how God brought things together out of nowhere.

So I am extremely excited about Anthony's leadership in Fort Worth, extremely excited about his family joining our family and how he's going to lead and love our family well. So if you would, would you be praying for Anthony as they transition from DC? I don't know if you've been to DC and then been to Fort Worth, but the only thing they really have in common is that people live in both places.

So if you could just be praying for him as they make the transition. It won't be too awful in that Anthony is actually from Fort Worth. So in some sense this is him coming home. He also got his PhD there at Southwestern, and so again, I want more time today, and I don't have it, but just a ferociously godly man, and I'm eager to learn from him and walk with him.

Now we're living in a bit of an interesting six or eight weeks I think are providentially a gift from God in order to allow us to see things we don't necessarily always see but are always true. Are you tracking with me? For whatever reason, over the last six weeks, the Lord has, in his divine sovereign mind, given a gift to you and me to kind of pull back the veil that hides us away into a false sense of everything's okay in the world.

So our televisions have lit up as of late with our brothers and sisters in Iraq being beheaded, having their children's children killed. Our televisions have lit up with the slaughter of Christians all around the Middle East, they have lit up with Israeli and Palestinian conflict yet again, and what in the [blank] is going on in Ferguson?

Here's what I want to say to you. The only thing that has changed over the last six weeks is our *awareness*. It's not like just all of a sudden... I've seen it happen. Multiple people have come up to me and said, "I just feel like the world has gone crazy." I've gone, "No, no, no, brother. The world has *been* crazy. It has been broken." I'm going to get emails, but let's play.

But because of where the majority of us find our lives playing out, behind the white Westernized privilege of suburban Dallas Metroplex we are unaware of the type of loss, sorrow, injustice, and brokenness that is rampant in a world that has fallen away from its Creator. Now my hope is anchored in one place, and it is anchored in this truth that the gospel of Jesus Christ can penetrate any and every darkness and is the *only* hope any of us has around any of this.

So governments, institutions, and systems are a part of what God does, but only the gospel changes hearts. So I refuse to lose hope in the midst of what appears to be madness, because I know we win. I know we win, and I know one day all of this nonsense will vanish. In my lifetime? I don't know, and it's not for me to know. Really what we're dealing with here is the world has always been a mess, but here's the stage you and I are on. It's our turn. It's our turn to be valiant. It's our turn to be prayerful. It's our turn to make war against injustice. It's just our turn.

The people before us were faithful to the Lord, and now it's our run, and I don't know how long our run lasts, but it's our turn. We're here. The world hasn't changed. It's just our turn to be filled with the Holy Spirit, informed by the Word of God, and to press into the darkness with calloused knees and calloused hands. Not just calloused knees or not just calloused hands...both. Both. So I thought we would look at King Uzziah.

Now there are a couple of reasons I want to look at King Uzziah. First and foremost is that I find by and large many of us are ignorant about Uzziah outside of the fact that in the year he died Isaiah went up to the temple...Isaiah 6. That's a coffee cup, kind of evangelical favorite verse. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah went up to the temple.

Remember the "Here I am, send me"? We love that text because it's very kind of Western American. "I got this for you, Lord. I'll handle it." "Who will go for me?" "I'll go for you, Lord. I'll handle this." So we love that story. Never mind what happens after that and never mind who King Uzziah is, just, "I got this for you, Lord. You know what? Why don't you rest? I'll handle this." We love that nonsense.

I thought it would be good to look at Uzziah, and I'll tell you why. There are two things we want to learn from his life, and then there is a lesson from his life we want to learn in regard to what not to do. So we're going to look at a couple of things we should do and we're going to look at one thing in particular we should not do as we look at his life.

Just a quick history lesson. Uzziah is growing up and actually becomes king of Judah in a time that all that seems to be stable is falling apart. In my house right now, my 8-year-old son and I are going through the Proverbs together. So he has a little journal. He has left the cartoon Bible phase. Are you tracking with me on that? It's no longer cartoon Bible phase. It's leather-bound ESV.

We're just walking through the Proverbs and he's loving it because (I don't know how you do your house) we don't say *stupid* in my house. But Proverbs is this is what a wise man does; this is what a foolish man does. So we use the word *stupid* right now in my house about this is what a wise man does; this is what a stupid man does.

So as we read the Proverbs, Reid writes in his little journal, "A wise man does this," whatever the text says, and, "A stupid man does this." He still hasn't, all these weeks in (I think we're like chapter 6 now)... He still is giggling as he writes *stupid*, right? "A stupid... Ha ha ha ha." We're going, and here's what has hit me a couple of times as we're studying Proverbs together, my son and I. King Solomon is writing the Proverbs, the wisdom he had gleaned from a fear of the Lord, to his sons, all of whom turn out to be morons.

So it's not lost on me that here I am with my son trying to impart to him the wisdom of God rooted in a fear of the Lord that Solomon's own boys did not receive and did not walk in. So Reid and I have actually already talked about that. To know but not to activate and walk in is to not know.

"Solomon's boys read this. Their daddy did the same thing I'm doing with you right now. We're reading it. We're talking about it. I'm pleading with you. Their daddy did the same thing."

Now why that's important is because of this. When Solomon dies, one of his idiot sons assumes the throne, and he thinks that what Israel needs right now is to have their taxes increased and to be

ruled with an iron fist, and he destroys the kingdom of Israel. In fact, the kingdom breaks into two kingdoms. You had the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

The northern kingdom would not last long before it's completely wiped out by the Assyrians. In fact, even Judah is only going to last another hundred years before the Babylonians carry them into a type of slavery for 70 years before they return and repair the walls. So what happens is the kingdom fractures in two.

They're still surrounded by enemies on every side, and everything appears to be lost, and everything is broken. It's broken internally in regard to how they see one another. It's broken externally in that they have enemies on every part of their border who continually attack. So it is a dark period in the life of the nation of Judah, the kingdom of Judah.

It's much like what we see now, where it just seems like every time we turn on our TV something else is broken, every time we dial in it just looks like there's more injustice, there's more loss, there's more confusion, there's more violence. So I want us to consider how Uzziah navigated the world you and I live in, and I want us to glean from him what is good and right, and I want us to see in him where we need to be watchful in our own lives.

So with that said, let's pick it up in verse 3 of 2 Chronicles 26. **"Uzziah was sixteen years old when he began to reign..."** Can we just stop there for a second? I know times are different, but I'm trying to get my brain around a 16-year-old with complete autonomy and complete authority. Like, a 16-year-old with absolute authority! "Go to bed." "Go to the dungeon." Like, what do you do to a 16-year-old with complete autonomy and authority? Yet this is who has ascended to the throne of Judah.

"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." Listen to 4. **"And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 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."**

Now the first thing I want us to look at concerning Uzziah as he is the king of Judah and navigates a really broken, busted-up world is he begins to humble himself and learn. What we see here is first and foremost it says he learned from all his father Amaziah did. Now I'll tell you why that's

important. It's because his father was not the sharpest knife in the drawer. I'll show you some of this.

Second Chronicles 25:1 says, "**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. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord...**" That all sounds familiar except for this comma. "**...yet not with...**" What? "**...a whole heart.**" So Uzziah's pops was half-hearted in his pursuit of the Lord.

Now when we are half-hearted about the things of God, the pressures and the brokenness of the world will more than likely eventually render us no-hearted about the things of the Lord. So what Amaziah, Uzziah's daddy, thinks is the right thing to do is he gathers the idols of the Edomites who had just conquered, and he brings the idols back to Jerusalem, and he sets the idols up in the temple, and he worships and makes sacrifices to the idols of the armies and peoples he had just conquered by the power of Yahweh.

So as you can imagine, the Lord is not pleased with this, and so in his right, good justice God removes Amaziah from the throne and little 16-year-old, just-learned-to-drive-the-chariot Uzziah ascends to the throne. Here's what I marvel at just as I consider it. How many of you would say, "I learned some really good things from my dad?"

Go ahead. I mean, surely something. Now watch this though. How many of you also learned some not-so-good things from your dad? All right, and even if you're sitting by your pops right now, just raise your hand. He knows. This is a good opportunity for him to gospel himself. So we all learned what is good and learned what is bad from our dads. We learn the good and the bad.

There's no father in this room, or ever, outside of God the Father, who has revealed to his children perfectly how we are to behave, interact, and walk here on the earth. So I picked up some really good things from my daddy, and I picked up some really bad things from my daddy. Uzziah...the same. He learned from his dad what was good and what was not so good, and according to what he learned he began to act.

He immediately humbles himself and he starts to learn. He doesn't go cynical. He doesn't throw everything his daddy believed out the window just because he was imperfect. So that starts to show you some of the character of Uzziah early on, because at 16 most of us can spot our dad's

weaknesses and can grow bitter and that just kind of angst of "I know better because Pops is inconsistent," but that's not where 16-year-old Uzziah is.

He sees his strengths and his weaknesses and he goes, "I'm going to walk in his strengths; I'm going to avoid his weakness." Then from there, the Bible tells us he finds Zechariah and he wants to be trained, and he wants to be trained in something very specific, and he wants to be trained in a fear of God. He wants to be trained in being able to see, savor, sit in, marinate in the greatness and majesty of God. He wants to feel small!

What a countercultural pursuit for us. "I want to feel small. I want to know there's something bigger and more powerful and more mighty than I am. I want to be small. I know I'm king of Judah, but king of Judah is nothing compared to King of the universe. I want to feel tiny. Train me in this. Everyone is going to be my servant. They're going to do what I say. I have way too much power. Teach me the fear of the Lord."

So what happens when you grow in a fear of the Lord? Well, there are two things you actually grow in as I see it in the Word of God. Proverbs 1:7 says, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...**" Then Proverbs 14:26 (and we can do this with a bunch of other verses, but these are just two I'm pulling out for time's sake). "**In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.**"

There are two pieces, two strengths that begin to be developed in the heart of someone who is growing, being trained in a fear of God, a fear of the Lord. The majesty of God, the size of God, the scope of his sovereignty and power creates two things in the hearts of those who are his. It creates wisdom and knowledge ("He knows; I don't. I'm going to submit to that") and it creates courage. It creates courage because God is God, and who can stay his hand, right?

If I'm a child of the King, what have I to fear? If I've been purchased by his blood, if I'm an adopted son, if I'm an heir of the promise, if I inherit new heavens and new earth, and I get unfettered access to God, what have I to fear? What could you do to me? Not like me? Kill me? Push me out to the margins? What could you possibly take from me? So you start to grow in confidence, and you don't grow in confidence in you.

See, the fear of the Lord doesn't produce confidence in you. In fact, it doesn't even produce confidence in your faith but rather the object of your faith. Our confidence grows in that *God* is able,

God is willing, *God* is at work, *God* will win. The ultimate victory belongs to the Lord, and our confidence begins to grow.

So now you have Uzziah, who has set his mind and heart to pursue the Lord. How has he done that? He's learning the good and the bad he sees. He's picking them up, he's paying attention, and he has found someone and said, "Teach me to fear God. Teach me his size. Teach me his scope. I don't want to talk about me; I want to talk about God. I want to see him as majestic and marvelous. Help me."

Then he's starting to grow in wisdom and grow in knowledge and grow in confidence. The image we get of the early reign of the king of Judah is one on his knees, crying out to God, poring over the Torah, digging into the Word of God, and being inflamed and emboldened by what he finds there, being inflamed and emboldened by the God whom he has trusted.

Then one of the things I want to fight for all the days God gives me breath is this weak notion that piety somehow equals passivity. That if you're a pious man, a pious woman, that somehow equals this weird, quick meekness where you just cross your fingers and hope God will. Because that's definitely not what we see in the Bible. In fact, pious men and women in the Bible are ferocious.

Uzziah gets up off of his knees, closes his Torah, filled with the Word of God, blown away by the majesty of God... He rejects passivity, and he gets to work. Man, he's going to get to work. In fact, I rarely feel lazy, and as I read this, I was like, "Man, I am wasting my life." Look at 6. So he closes the Torah, quasi says, "Amen," and...

"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. God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians who lived in Gurbaal and against the Meunites. The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong.

Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the Angle, and fortified them. 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..." I love this half sentence. **"...for he loved the soil.**

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." Now you almost need to diagram that sentence, don't you? That guy Jeiel, Maaseiah (a noun), into Hananiah who does this. Okay, it's a confusing sentence. But from there it goes to here.

"The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses of mighty men of valor was 2,600. Under their command was an army of 307,500, who could make war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for all the army shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and stones for slinging. In Jerusalem he made machines, 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..."

What we see happening in Uzziah's life is you have a man who's walking in humility, who's learning, who's putting himself under the Word of God to grow in a fear of God, to look at God as marvelous and majestic, to feel the glad-heartedness and confidence that comes in feeling small next to the size and might of God, and then with calloused knees, he closes the Word that is now in his heart and he begins to look across Judah and he sees injustice and he sees threats and he sees needs, and he gets to work.

He begins to, where God placed him as the king of Judah, push back what is dark where he was planted. See, we bloom where we are. As the king, he starts to push. He starts to create. He starts to leverage his authority. He begins to push back those who would make war against God's people. He begins to provide food. He begins to provide drink. He begins to build ranches and plant vineyards and plant gardens so the people might be fed. He begins to have his life wrung out to establish the type of human flourishing that occurs when the people of God submit to the will of God.

Although his knees are calloused, he doesn't just stay in his prayer room. He gets into the mess and he gets into the grind and he gets into the fight. So my earnest hope for you is that you would be men and women who love the prayer closet, who cry out to God to move and to work, but might we also get in the fray.

I think the question is always...*Well, okay, how does that work?* How do we get into the fray? I think partly that's how you've been wired and designed in where you are. Let me try to use this example. I am not handy. I'm just going to be straight with you. If I can't duct tape it or spray it with WD-40,

I'm incompetent and need to make a phone call. Like, I don't even try. I'm like *psst psst*. "No, that didn't fix it. I've just got to Google somebody. This guy. Let's call him." Then get it fixed. I'm just not handy.

Even when I try, I end up making things worse. I'm not skilled. I'm just not handy. But there are men here who are unbelievably handy. In fact, my father-in-law is one of them. I really believe one of the reasons God gave me Lauren as a wife is just to keep me humble by shaming me via the talents of my father-in-law.

True story. One time we needed a new table and we were just talking about it, and he's like, "I'll build you one." Like, who builds tables? Don't you just go buy one? Not my father-in-law. He wants to take a tree out of his backyard and build me a table just to shame me. It's totally just to shame me in front of my wife. He's still mad that I swooped in and got her. "I'll make that table for you. I'll fix that."

Sometimes I even think he's jacking with me. Like we were on a boat once and it wouldn't start, and he was like, "Yeah, that's the magneto." I was like, "Brother, that's an X-Man. Really? You're going to do this to me in front of friends?" But there actually is a magneto in a boat. I really thought it was an X-Man.

These men in our church, here's what they do. They serve our single moms. They walk alongside those we have connections with in the community who need help, who have great difficulty keeping their houses, homes, and properties up because of either some wave of difficulty or because the men who should be doing that have punted on their responsibility. This is them pushing back what is dark in the world.

If we look at what happened this weekend down at our Dallas Campus, the Dallas Campus did transform, and just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of our covenant members descended on some of the more difficult schools in and around Dallas in order to get things ready. We gave out free haircuts and free backpacks and free school supplies, and we painted hallways and set up teachers' rooms, and we prayed over schools, and we began to engage the community in ways where we're trying to give back.

Now our hope is that that moves past just simple service and into longstanding relationship. We will never right the wrongs and brokenness around us by busing in white folk to difficult areas.

These issues will be solved when there are legitimate relationships that seek to be understanding, informed by the gospel, where we walk together with our kids growing up together, our dining room tables being filled with people who don't have our same story, don't have our same background.

When I look at Ferguson and think of the nonsense that's going on in Ferguson and even how it's being handled on all different sides, my heart just grieves, and it grieves on multiple fronts. But as a white man who does not struggle with white guilt, here's what I know. My 8-year-old son is blond and he has blue eyes. The white is strong in him. I mean, the white is *strong* in him. Blond hair. Blue eyes.

Here's what I know about my son. My son never in his life will be followed around a store with someone wondering what he's doing...ever. No one will ever watch my little boy when he's a teenager walk down the side of the road and wonder what he's up to. He's going to wear a little polo shirt, maybe an Aggie tee shirt. Nobody is going to ever...

In the end here, I'm not going to worry when he's a teenager and he goes out that if he does something asinine that somebody is going to shoot him. I'm just not going to have worry about that. Do you know why? Because he's blond-headed and he has blue eyes. He can go out and be just a normal, freaking idiot teenager, and I don't have any concern that a police officer is going to shoot him. None. It doesn't enter my mind.

I don't have to train him, "When you get pulled over today, you'd better put your hands up on that thing. You'd better get that light on." I don't have to train him because nobody is going to approach him that way. It's just not going to happen. It's not going to happen because he has blond hair and he has blue eyes. That is not true about my African American friends and their sons. They do have to train their sons a bit differently than I have to train mine. They do have to wrestle...

Like when somebody stares at me across a restaurant, do you know what I think of? "I wonder if they know who I am? I wonder if they go to The Village?" I don't ever go, "Why's that dude staring at me because I'm white?" I don't have to do that because I'm part of the predominant, privileged culture. But some of my African American friends do have to go through that wrestle.

Again, here's what happens with white privilege. What happens in white privilege is now in our head we're just, "Well, they need to, and they need to..." We're just completely ignorant of history

and why and what happens. What the gospel has purchased for us in an event like this is the opportunity to mirror and model well what Christ has purchased for us in the cross, a leaning in to understand, a leaning in with great compassion in order to support and walk alongside our brothers and sisters who have been purchased by the blood of Christ. We're going to have to lean in.

So as I'm talking about Anglos, it has to move from... Let me tell you how I believe the progression of understanding has to work. We have to be honest about our own bigotry that's still in there. I hate the politically correct nonsense that rests over our culture right now. It's ridiculous. It has done nothing to change our hearts; it's just changed our mouths, and it has sent our bigotry underground. It hasn't transformed it; it has just made it not popular.

Here's what needs to happen first. Believers in Christ of the Anglo persuasion must learn to pay attention to their thoughts when they're driving in their car and see some young African American boys walking on the street. What do you think? Even in a situation like Ferguson, is our default to just go, "Well, I mean, it's obvious. He robbed a store. Surely, he wasn't an angel"? Sure, and do you know who is not also an angel? Most of the children in this community, but the Bill of Rights is the Bill of Rights and brutality is brutality, and there's a rule of law that must be obeyed.

Where does it start? What are you thinking? What's going on in your mind? What's going on in your heart? See, the reason I said providentially something's at work is because God is at work in *our* hearts to reveal things we'd like to think aren't there. So we pay attention, and then we engage empathetically, and that moves into relationships. See, this is never solved until all of our friends don't look exactly like us. You have to lean into the awkwardness.

If you're African American and you're here, here's how you can serve us. We're not all racists, but a lot of us don't understand because we're white and we've always been white and we don't know anything other than being white. I'm grateful to God that God has sent me some African American brothers whom I'm able to lean into, who are able to lean into me. It's this nonaggression, I-don't-understand, can-you-help-me-understand kind of thing that we need.

Years ago, one of our Acts 29 pastors, an African American, said, "Pastor Matt, can I ask you a question? I don't want to offend you, but I've been wondering something about white people." I qualify, so I said, "All right, what's up, Pastor?" He said, "I don't want to offend you." Already, I'm starting to go, "What's he about to ask me?"

Here's what he asked. "Why is white people worship so morose?" I said, "What?" He was like, "You guys know you can enjoy the Lord, right? I mean, you can clap and shout and sing and enjoy God. Why is it always like a funeral when you guys sing?" Here's what I'm thinking, "Are you kidding? We just blew that song up! We rocked that out. I'm going to get some emails about how we rocked that out from some older white folk. We're pushing the boundaries, bro."

I didn't get offended. Here's what I thought, "What else don't I know about us? What else is true about us I don't know?" Really the play between us must be one of, "Help me understand," and there must be grace extended, and there must be patience shown, and we must not push away from the table too quickly. But we don't just pray. Calloused knees? Yes, but calloused hands.

All the good work that was done yesterday down in Dallas, if that doesn't lead to longstanding relationships where discipleship takes place, then we painted some walls. Awesome. But I'm not quite sure what else we accomplished. So we engage. How has God wired you? How has he placed you? The handymen are engaging in those ways.

Some of our lawyers worked, kind of pushed back some of the systemic injustice we see down in Lewisville and some of the places we've seen in this area. Others still use their business savvy to help and serve and push back what is dark. Others... I mean, I could just go on and on. We bloom where we're planted.

Not all of us need to learn New Testament Greek. That's not what Christian maturity looks like. It's sitting under the fear of the Lord, looking at his size, then paying attention at the world around us, and with a deep-held confidence in God's ability, not ours, we begin to dream big and act. So we dream big not because we're able but because we're confident that God can. We get to work not because we believe we're going to be able to overthrow anything but because we're confident that God will and it's our turn to be valiant. That's it. That's all this is. Our turn to be valiant.

Because I'm going to be straight. I have listened to the ignorance of my grandparents and watched their lack of action with shame. When I'm 80, I just don't want to look back and go, "Ah, I wish I'd have leveraged it a bit more, wish I'd have gotten in the fight." I have no doubt my grandchildren will be somewhat embarrassed of me one way or the other, but ultimately when it comes to these things, I want to serve the Lord and be wrung out and have very calloused knees and very calloused hands. I want to, in confidence of the Lord's power, dream big dreams and work very, very, very hard.

Then from there, one of the things that happens is God begins to (according to this text) marvelously help you. Can we just agree that I think being marvelously helped by God is something I really want? I don't want just help; I want *marvelous* help. It's one thing to just help; it's another thing to be marvelously helped. What I want is to be marvelously helped by the Lord.

Now the danger in being marvelously helped by the Lord is there is an insidious little thing in the human heart that wants to fail to acknowledge God and own the success as the work of our hands. Once that has happened, the very power source that has flown through us to see the victories vanishes and leaves us to the imaginations of our hearts or our own egos.

Let's look back at 15. **"In Jerusalem he made machines, 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..."** Comma. **"...till he was..."** What? **"...strong."** Now we know strength isn't the issue because the Bible has repeatedly said in this chapter that he was strong and that was a really good thing. But there's a different kind of strength now going on in Uzziah, and we'll pick up on that in 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. But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, and they withstood King Uzziah..."

Now again, this piety and passivity paradigm gets blown up. Eighty priests called by the Bible men of valor charged after the king who was singlehandedly responsible for building up armies under the power of God, driving out the Philistines, and staking claims. My boy had killed some folk. And the priests were more afraid of God than they were of man, and may that always be true of us.

"...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.'"

That's Exodus 30. **"Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God.' 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."**

What has happened here is Uzziah, who had been trained in a fear of God, who saw injustice, need, and worked hard, dreamed big, began to grind it out for the glory of God, somehow began to feel confident that he was the one who made all of this happen. When that happens, once that switch flips, the way we think and interact gets very broken.

There are two things that become apparent here. The first is that Uzziah has forgotten who he is. What does this mean? He's the king, he's not a priest, which means God had given him a role to play, and he stepped outside of that role, and in glad disobedience to the Lord he begins to do what he *knew* he was forbidden to do by God. See, because when you're the man, you can do everything better than anybody else. This is the way he's behaving. He has lost self-awareness.

When you lose self-awareness, you have no idea how your behavior affects others, and you think God should conform to you rather than you conform to God. "Well, I know that's what he said, but I..." Like God should be pleased to have you on his team. What's going to happen if he doesn't have you playing QB for him, right?

Then on top of that, the second thing almost always happens when you lose self-awareness. God is big and we're small. That fear of the Lord that was in him. Once that happens, hearing rebuke becomes near impossible. Why? Because you're the man. Who would anybody be to question you? See, it's interesting to note in this text that Uzziah gets leprosy not when he goes in to light the incense but when he becomes angry at the rebuke of the priest.

You can almost in the text feel Uzziah's arrogance. But the priest runs in, and here's his rebuke. "You know this isn't given to you. You know Exodus 30. This hasn't been given to you. It has been given to the priests in Aaron's line to light the incense. You know that. What you're doing does not please the Lord."

Now Uzziah has a moment that's going to come for you and me over and over and over again. In the mercy of God, being confronted with our sins, we'll have the opportunity to hear. Uzziah has a chance here to put the incense down, to put down the censer, and to walk out, to own his sin and plead for forgiveness. God would grant it. God's grace is massive. It's part of fearing God to know he's a God of forgiveness.

But instead, Uzziah burns with rage. "Who's this priest to talk to me like this? Has this priest conquered armies? Has this priest planted vineyards? Has this priest built towers? Has this priest

armed 307,500 men? What has this priest done for Israel? I'm the one who has done this." He grows in rage.

When you're found out in your sin, one of two things will happen. You will grow angry and heartbroken at the sin itself or you will grow angry toward the one who brought the sin to your attention. Those who have been trained in the fear of the Lord and are walking in it will receive the rebuke process and repent. Those who are not, those who are maybe half-hearted, will almost always argue with the process or argue with the one who brought the news or justify the fact that their behavior is not sin because of all the other good things they do.

Look, I'm going to throw myself out there. I hate being rebuked. Never enjoyed it. In fact, in my dark, quick-witted heart (and I feel like the Lord does some things), I think I've been rebuked a bunch, and 95 percent of all of the rebukes I have ever received had truth in them.

Almost every time it has taken me a couple of days to get to that truth because I have a very quick mind and I'm able very quickly as you bring to my attention my shortcoming and failure to very quickly know *your* shortcoming and failure, as though that is somehow a reason for me to justify not listening to your concern.

Then one of the things the Lord has done to me is I am rarely rebuked by people I like. I'm just saying... It's like the Lord goes, "Let me show you how much I love you, brother. You have a little seed of arrogance here. I'm going to expose that mug, and I'm going to do it with this brother over here because I know he gets on your nerves."

Think about it. I don't mind being outed by God to people I like, but why is it the Lord tends to get those people who don't do it well? This is in my own heart. It's hard to receive it. I want to justify. I want to go, "Man, are you serious? You're stopping me here in this restaurant while I'm with my family to have this conversation with me. Aren't you just a...? You don't even go to the church."

I walk away. I'm like, "They don't even go to the church, trying to correct somebody. He isn't even a member of the church. Why don't you get in the trench with me? Then you can bring up my weakness." Right? This is to my shame. Then what happens is I lie in bed at night and the Holy Spirit starts to do work and go, "Yeah, but is it true?" What? "Lord, I'd like to pray right now you'd send some she-bears to maul that fool like you did in Elisha when they said he was bald."

The Spirit is like, "But is it true?" Over and over and over again, you will have the opportunity to hear the Word of the Lord and to confess and repent. We must guard our hearts as we work to push back what is dark, being informed by a fear of the Lord, and being confident in God's ability to overcome.

We have no hope but the gospel. We have no hope but Christ breaking down the walls of hostility between us. That's Ferguson. That's Iraq right now. Let me tell you what I'm praying for. I've just been reading over and over again about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Murdering Christians? Check. Pretty well known terrorist among evangelical followers of Christ in the first century? Check. Brutal? Check. Powerfully converted and becomes one of the greatest missionaries of the Christian faith? Check.

So I feel powerless about what's going on in Iraq, but I'm certainly praying God would raise up a Paul out of the leadership of the ISIS. Why not? God is God. He has done it before. Why won't he do it in our day? Let's ask. Steeped in the fear of the Lord. Walking in humility. Might we grow in wisdom and knowledge. Might we grow in the courage that comes in knowing our God is able. Might be dream big, might we work hard, and might we guard our hearts. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women. I pray even now you'd begin to do work in our hearts, that you would expose ways of thinking that don't line up with your Word, that you would expose ways of interacting that are inconsistent with gospel belief and behavior, that you would stir in our hearts a desire for justice tempered with a heart of grace, compassion, and empathy.

Continue to build and strengthen this place as a picture of what it means to be gospel people. Help us. We're foolish and we'll stumble often. Strengthen us by your might. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.