

“Prideful Ambition”
2 Kings 14:1-14
(Preached a Trinity, June 19, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 13** ended with the struggles of Israel with the Arameans, first with Hazael and then with his son, Ben-hadad. According to the Word of the LORD, Joash defeated them three times, but no more.
2. Now as we enter **Chapter 14** our attention is briefly returned to the Southern Kingdom. Amaziah, the son of Joash has become king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king and we are told he did that which was right in the sight of God, except like those before him, he did not remove the high places.
We are pleased to read he did right, but should we be? It was still partial obedience from a divided heart. Is God pleased with partial obedience? Does He allow obedience with exceptions? Are we allowed to pick and choose which commands we will obey and which ones we will disregard?
We must never forget the meaning of our distinctive, “Personal Holiness.”
It refers to a life separated unto God.
3. Things were well in Judah for a season, but King Amaziah soon became prideful and ambitious. He killed all who were guilty in the plot to assassinate his father. Then he turned his attention to Edom.
 - A. He numbered his men and then hired mercenaries from Israel. **2 Chronicles** fills in many of the details. It tells us a man of God came and told him to send the mercenaries home. The mercenaries were furious but returned, attacking many of the defenseless towns along the way.
Ahaziah killed 10,000 Edomites in battle and captured Sela which he renamed Joktheel.
 - B. 2 Chronicles records that Amaziah brought back idols from Edom and worshipped them.
2 Chronicles 25:14-15 NAU - "Now after Amaziah came from slaughtering the Edomites, he brought the gods of the sons of Seir, set them up as his gods, bowed down before them and burned incense to them. ¹⁵ Then the anger of the LORD burned against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of the people who have not delivered their own people from your hand?"
 - C. Amaziah rebuked the prophet and in a quiet voice the prophet announced God's judgment. Sadly, he ignored the warning.
2 Chronicles 25:16 NAU - "As he was talking with him, the king said to him, "Have we appointed you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?" Then the prophet stopped and said, "I know that God has planned to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."

4. Full of pride in his successes he turned his attention towards the Northern Kingdom and sent a message to Jehoash challenging him to face his army in war. It was bold arrogance. Basking in his defeat of the Edomites he wanted more. Jehoash tried to speak reason into his heart by telling him a brief parable of a rough briar making demands upon a stately cedar but was crushed under the foot of a wild animal.
5. It was a humiliating assault upon Ahaziah's pride. Jehoash's message was, "Go home." Don't risk being destroyed by a much more powerful army. But it's hard to speak wisdom into the heart of a fool. Years ago, after receiving a phone call from an unreasonable church member, I posted a verse from Proverbs on the bulletin board above my desk which is still there to this day. "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words" **Proverbs 2:9.**
6. Jehoash appraised the problem well, **2 Kings 14:10** - "your heart has become proud" 2 Chronicles records that it was by God's purpose that Ahaziah would not hear so that he might be judged for his idolatry. **2 Chronicles 25:20 NAU** - "But Amaziah would not listen, for it was from God, that He might deliver them into the hand of *Joash* because they had sought the gods of Edom."
7. Like the endless ranks of humanity, Amaziah was swallowed by his pride. It can swallow us all. Pride is the most difficult of all vices to put to death.
- A. All of us can attest to this. How hard it is for us to learn humility. In our flesh we continually want recognition. We seek to exalt ourselves. We struggle with envy which finds its strength in pride. We gossip, a sin that feeds off our pride.
- B. We find it almost impossible to stay quiet. Our tongues seem uncontrollable. **James 3:7-8 NAU** - "For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison."
- C. David wrote words that seem almost impossible for anyone to observe. **Psalms 131:1 NAU** - "O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; Nor do I involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me." Do we not continually involve ourselves in matters that do not concern us. We want to insert ourselves into every affair. We can't help but give our opinion in every matter. **Psalms 131:2 NAU** - "Surely I have composed and quieted my soul" The word for quieted means to be dumb or silent.

- I. The problem with our sinful condition is the desire to exalt ourselves
- A. We seek to elevate ourselves above others
1. We desire power and authority. This is why it is so hard to submit to authority.
 2. We desire fame and recognition and admiration
 3. In our desire to lift ourselves we often trample on others in our selfishness.
 - a. Ahaziah was intoxicated by his own successes. He wanted more and more. The Edomites offered resistance but fell to the superior forces of Ahaziah. Ahaziah assumed Israel under Jehoash would also fall in defeat.
 - b. What was his plan? Was it expansion of his kingdom? Not likely. It was more a matter of personal ambition.
 4. No amount of reason could turn him from his wild plans. Not even a word from God would sway him.
- B. Psalm 131 describes our pride as haughty eyes and involving ourselves in great matters – matters that we should steer away from.
1. In our pride we believe our opinions are the best, our decisions are the wisest, our choices are the only right option.
 2. The most dangerous aspect of this haughtiness is seeking to exalt ourselves above God
 - a. All sin is seeking to dethrone God
 - b. Seeking our own glory is to rob God of His rightful glory
- C. The Godly person resists this heart of pride
1. The opposite of this self-exaltation is a willingness to be humbled
 2. God often enters into our life and humbles us.
1 Peter 5:5-6 NAU - "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,"
- II. The humble life is a life resolved to contentment
- A. Ahaziah was ever seeking to advance himself – This is pride on display.
1. He was driven by self-advancement and personal achievement
Self-promotion, Sinful ambition—“great things, high things”
 2. In his desire to advance himself he didn’t realize the God of the universe was opposing his every effort
2 Chronicles 25:16 NAU - "As he was talking with him, the king said to him, "Have we appointed you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?" Then the prophet stopped and said, "I know that God has planned to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."
2 Chronicles 25:20 NAU - "But Amaziah would not listen, for it was from God, that He might deliver them into the hand of *Joash* because they had sought the gods of Edom."

3. The man of pride is always injecting himself into the affairs of others. Of the sinful foolish widows Paul writes:
1 Timothy 5:13 NAU - "And at the same time they also learn *to be idle*, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*."
 4. This sin is the ultimate desire to rise up above God and look down upon all else—to set our eyes upon lofty things and engage in great matters. It is hyper ambition. God resist such ambition.
- B. This is a hard lesson for us to receive.
1. On one hand we must be hard working. We must plan big. We must prepare big.
 2. But we must guard against discontent, against an unsettled spirit, against sinful ambition where we are never satisfied.
 - a. We must guard against the lust for self-promotion.
 - b. As Christians our only desire should be to promote Christ.
2 Corinthians 10:17 NAU - "But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord."
1 Corinthians 10:31 NAU - "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."
 3. James Montgomery Boice said that there is a great difference between aspiration and ambition. We should aspire to grow in Christ and achieve those things that bring Him glory. Ambition has an eye towards our own advancement and our own rise in position.
 4. The great men in the Bible were those who waited upon God. They were those God exalted - Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David.
 - a. Moses spent 40 years in Midian preparing for 40 years of ministry. He had to be humbled before he could be a great leader. God's work is often a lengthy work. Even when God sought to raise Moses up Moses humbled himself.
Exodus 3:11 NAU - "But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"
 Later it would be said of Moses that he was the most humble man upon the face of the earth.
Numbers 12:3 - "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth."
 - b. Joshua spent 40 years laboring under the leadership of Moses before he was raised up as Israel's leader.
 - c. Those who were proud and ambitious God first had to humble before they could be useful.
 Paul was humbled with blindness, with rejection even among the brethren, with his thorn in the flesh.
 5. When Christ is at the center of all things He will promote you in His good timing.
1 Peter 5:6 NAU - "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,"

Conclusion:

1. Remember, our life on this earth will always be a conflict of desires. We are continually mortifying the flesh. Ahaziah was the king but he could not rule himself. It ultimately consumed him. The New Testament gives us warning and instructs us to put our flesh to death.

Romans 8:13 KJV - "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Colossians 3:5-8 KJV - "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷ In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ⁸ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

2. This is a hard work. It isn't easy to deny the cries of the flesh. Our life is one of continually following hard after Christ. It is a continual weaning of the soul. But this cannot finally happen without the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us.