

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Wisdom Needed to Finish Well – Part II.*"

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

We learned from Solomon's life that it doesn't matter how much wisdom you have if you don't apply it.

We also learned from Solomon's life that it doesn't matter how well you start. It matters how you finish.

Listen to this verse about him...

1 Kings 11:4 For WHEN SOLOMON WAS OLD his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

The part that surprised me most about Solomon isn't that he turned from the Lord, but WHEN he turned from the Lord: when he **was old**.

He finished poorly because he failed to apply the wisdom God gave him.

If Solomon was the only example of a king finishing poorly after starting well I wouldn't have developed any sermons on this topic. But since it's a theme I thought it deserved attention. If Scripture makes something important through repetition, we should make it important.

In our last sermon we looked at three other examples that I left 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

We will look at two more examples this morning, and one more next week.

Our new king for this morning...

Lesson 1: These kings reveal it's hard to finish well: (example 5) Joash.

Please turn to 2 Chronicles 24.

You might remember Joash was the child king who was hidden in the temple from his evil grandmother Athaliah. She murdered all of his siblings and if he hadn't been kept from her, it would've meant the end of the messianic line.

He experienced one of the most unique childhoods in the Old Testament, b/c he grew up in the temple. Look at verse one...

2 Chronicles 24:1 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. 2 And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.

Jehoiada the priest and his wife were Joash's godly adoptive parents.

He started off wonderfully, restoring the temple, following the LORD. But verse two hints at the problems there will be in the future. He did what was right but only while Jehoiada was alive.

Skip to verse 15...

2 Chronicles 24:15 But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died. He was 130 years old at his death.

When Jehoiada died it left a large vacuum in Joash's life. Sadly it ended up being filled by ungodly people who came to influence him.

Look at verse 17...

2 Chronicles 24:17 Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them. 18 And they abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs.

So he turned from the Lord, but God graciously reached out to him. Look at verse 20...

2 Chronicles 24:20 Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.'"

Joash grew up with Zechariah. He was the son of the people who raised him. It's like his brother was confronting him,

I can't say for sure why God chose Zechariah to be the one to speak to Joash, but if there's anyone Joash would listen to, you'd think it would be him.

At this moment Joash faced the same choice all of us face when we're confronted:

- Respond humbly and repent...
- Respond pridefully w/ anger...

But look what happened...

2 Chronicles 24:21 But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord. 22 Thus Joash the king did not remember

the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, "May the Lord see and avenge!"

Joash murdered his own stepbrother for confronting him.

Since Joash responded this way, look what God did in verse 23...

2 Chronicles 24:23 At the end of the year the army of the Syrians came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. 24 Though the army of the Syrians had come with few men, the Lord delivered into their hand a very great army, because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

This is written in such a way to show that they lost to a small army because God wasn't for them. It was a judgment against Joash.

You would think this is when God had him killed, but something even worse happened to him. Look at verse 25...

2 Chronicles 24:25 When they had departed from him, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed. So he died, and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings.

His own people killed him in his bed, b/c even they were upset w/ him for murdering Zechariah.

I think there's an important lesson we can learn from Joash...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

Lesson 2: Wisdom is walking in the truth we've learned.

We must walk in the truth – or wisdom – we've learned. It's not enough to simply know truth.

We wonder how this could happen w/ someone like Joash who had been raised so well and sheltered from so much...

Let me first say it had nothing to do w/ Joash being sheltered. You would really misunderstand this story if you walked away thinking parents shouldn't shelter or protect their children. There are plenty of children whose spiritual lives were ruined b/c their parents exposed them to – or worse introduced them into – worldly or compromising environments and the effects were devastating.

Instead, Joash's problem is contained in verse 22 in the words **the king did not remember**. This doesn't mean Joash didn't remember like we think of people not remembering. It doesn't mean...

- He forgot how he grew up...
- Or forgot what he was taught...

- Or forgot how kindly his family treated him...

It means none of it heart. He never let any of it change him inwardly.

He was the young man who could say all the right things, but he didn't believe what he was saying and he didn't want to live it when he was older...so he didn't finish well.

He didn't walk in the truth he'd learned.

Our next example...

Lesson 1: These kings reveal it's hard to finish well (example 6) Uzziah.

Go ahead and turn two chapters to the right, to **2 Chronicles 26**. Look at verse four...

2 Chronicles 26:4 And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 5 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.

This is like Joash, isn't it? There's a hint at him having problems later in life...when he stopped seeking the Lord.

It says God made him prosper and this is practically an understatement. Second only to Solomon few men in Scripture experienced as much success as Uzziah did. I'm not going to read through all the verses, but I'll give you the highlights:

- God gave him great victories over the Philistines
- He built cities
- He received tribute from people
- He was famous
- He had a large army
- He created military weapons, armor, and war machines...

He was a true renaissance man who did many things.

But look at verse 15...

2 Chronicles 26:15 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 (that means God helped him), TILL HE WAS STRONG. 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.

These last two verses are so important. In verse 16 notice the words **till he was strong**. All his success lead to pride, which led to destruction.

Interestingly, Uzziah's name means, "my strength is Jehovah." When his strength was in Jehovah, he was fine, but when he became strong and proud, he got in trouble.

If you write in your Bible, circle the words **when he was strong, he grew proud to his destruction** and write, Proverbs 16:18, which says...

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

This is like word-for-word what he didn't do.

Two other proverbs make the same point:

- **Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.**
- **Proverbs 18:12 Before destruction a man's heart is [proud], but humility comes before honor.**

There's a lot in Proverbs, which is the book of wisdom, about pride getting us in trouble and humility leading to blessing.

In acting this way Uzziah showed a real foolishness and disregard for wisdom...and this brings us to lesson three...

Lesson 3: wisdom keeps us from pride, which leads to destruction.

Uzziah wanted to go into the temple to offer incense, which was against God's law for anyone to do except the priests.

God's plan was to unite the offices of priest and king in One Individual and that's His Son, Jesus Christ. Uzziah was dangerously close to ruining one of the best OT types of Christ being a king and priest.

I told you in our last sermon that one of the themes with these kings is they were rebuked, but they wouldn't listen. They became unteachable. It was one of the main causes of their fall.

We see the same happen with Uzziah. Look at verse 17...

2 Chronicles 26:17 But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, 18 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. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God."

Think about what this looked like...

It would've been a dramatic scene. 80 priests joined Azariah when he went into the temple after Uzziah. It says they were men of valor b/c it took a lot of courage to do so. Uzziah was the most

powerful, famous, and popular king the nation had ever known. They knew the danger they were in. Uzziah could easily have them imprisoned or worse. Confronting him in this situation was like confronting a wild animal. When people are filled w/ pride, they're not rational. But they knew his sin was so great it justified this confrontation.

Uzziah had NO idea the blessing it was for the priests to warn him. At this point even though he acted very foolishly nothing bad has happened to him! To that end, God's been very merciful. His pride and foolishness warranted discipline, but God has withheld it.

All Uzziah had to do was turn around and walk out. If he did that, his only punishment would be a rebuke from the priests!

The problem is he's blinded by pride and he thinks he's too great of a king, and he's done too many wonderful things to be told what to do by a group of lowly priests.

Look at verse 19...

2 Chronicles 26:19 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.

Twice the verse points out Uzziah's anger. Despite the seriousness of his sin, it wasn't until he responded this way that God's righteous anger broke out against him.

2 Chronicles 26:20 And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out (I'm sure by this point he wanted to get out), because the Lord had struck him. 21 And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king's household, governing the people of the land.

This was a terrible punishment for Uzziah to receive, but it was actually merciful. Listen to this...

In **Num 3:10 and 18:7** God said, **"You shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."**

He actually should've been killed!

Leprosy was a fitting disease for him to receive, b/c when it broke out over his body it made him look physically like he looked spiritually.

He had to spend the rest of his life out of the temple. He wanted greater freedom. He don't want to follow the rules. The greater freedom he pursued put him in bondage.

Look at verse 23...

2 Chronicles 26:23 And Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, “HE IS A LEPER.” And Jotham his son reigned in his place.

This is how he finished: as a leper. That’s how everyone remembered him.

Despite all the good he did, it wasn’t:

- He is a general
- He is a city builder
- He is an inventor
- He is a renaissance man

It was, “ a leper.”

Soon after I became a Christian someone started giving me copies of Bob Coy’s sermons. I thought they were very powerful, and I had never heard anything like them before. He had a Calvary Chapel megachurch in Florida. I think it was the third-biggest church in the nation at the time.

A few years ago it was revealed that he was addicted to pornography and had committed adultery on his wife. This past week a similar revelation came out about Carl Lentz.

Carl Lentz is young enough that perhaps he will repent and people will remember him as something other than an adulterer. But Bob Coy was old enough that I think when people think of him they just think, “he is an adulterer.”

When we finish the race, what will people say about us?

- He is a man who loved Christ...or he is a man who loved himself
- She was a woman who loved Christ...or she was a woman who loved herself.

Thinking about the Christian life as a race is very applicable because many verses in the New Testament make this comparison. Here are a few...

- **1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know THAT IN A RACE ALL THE RUNNERS RUN, but only one receives the prize? So RUN THAT YOU MAY OBTAIN IT. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I DO NOT RUN AIMLESSLY.**
- **Acts 20:24 I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I MAY FINISH MY [RACE NIV, NKJV] and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus.**
- **2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE, I have kept the faith.**
- When Paul wanted to criticize the Galatians, he said they were not finishing well: **Galatians 5:7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?**

I want to share a little about my work history, b/c some of it helped me understand my relationship w/ Christ after I became a Christian...

My first job was doing landscaping for an older woman. That's when I realized I didn't want to be a landscaper.

My second job was at the local lumber mill when I was 16 years old. I got paid six dollars per hour, which seemed like a lot of money to me at the time. I was one of the only two teenagers, so I worked with a bunch of men, which made me feel like a real man.

Everything was going well until I got fired. I blame the spotted owl. There was a big concern about it going extinct, so the mills couldn't cut down trees, and when they had to make layoffs they let my friend and me go. I tried to convince them that it would actually be a great investment to keep me, because even though I couldn't do as much as the older men I was only getting six dollars per hour versus the considerably more they were making, so I was a good investment for them. My strategy didn't work.

My next job was as a waiter at a Mexican restaurant. I loved it, but one day the owner asked me if I could take care of some of the stuff outside. It seemed like each day I showed up she was asking me to do more of the grounds, until finally I wasn't really a waiter any longer. I was pretty much back to landscaping. The worst part was I still got paid the same as when I was a waiter, but I no longer got any money for tips. So I was doing something I didn't like for less money.

One good thing about the situation is it showed me how much I loved being a waiter. That's what I did through high school and college, so it's a profession that I developed quite a bit of familiarity with.

Interestingly, it helped me understand finishing well as a Christian...and this brings us to Lesson 4...

Lesson 4: Finish well by waiting on the Lord.

As I looked for verses dealing with running the race, I found one about finishing well. I think this is the clearest place in Scripture telling us how to do so...

Isaiah 40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,

Even those who are young and strong become faint and weary as they run, which tells you it happens to anyone.

Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

So those who wait on the Lord will be able to finish well, b/c they'll have the strength they need; they'll be able to run and not grow weary.

How does this happen? It says by waiting on the Lord.

The Hebrew word for wait is *qavah* and it means: “to look for, hope, expect.” It also means “to bind together,” as though our attention is bound to Him.

Waiting on the Lord means looking to Him, hoping in Him, and keeping our attention fixed on him.

- This isn't a passive waiting that sits around with nothing to do.
- Instead it's an active waiting.

Imagine we're good waiters standing by the side of the table:

- We wait to see how best to serve
- We don't give instructions. We wait for instructions.
- We do our best to please and satisfy and get what they want when they want it.
- They're always right. We don't argue and correct.
- We don't say what we're going to do.
- Instead, we wait to see what we're supposed to do.

If you're anything like me, most of the time you've grown weary and faint is when you've run ahead of the Lord.

If we wait on the Lord this way, we'll run the race well and have the strength we need, b/c we won't be going too far ahead or lagging behind.

The attention isn't on ourselves and our circumstances. Instead the attention is on the Lord and what He wants from us.

Let me close w/ this quote...

Richard Ferguson said: *“Waiting on the Lord is serving the Lord in whatever role he has chosen for us, in spite of what we want or think. It is faithfully discharging the duties of one who is called by Christ to serve in trial, hardship and persecution. It is being willing to let Christ teach us lessons of humility, reliance on our Heavenly Father, and even serving the best interest of one we might call our enemy. Waiting on the Lord is dying daily to what we think we need to have, need to do and need to say.”*