

THE SIN OF PRIDE IN THE CHURCH—WRONG REACTION TO CORRECTION

INTRODUCTION: “Big Picture,” we are talking about God’s command for us to **be holy**. To be holy, we need to be separate **from sin**—and separated unto God.

So far, we’ve only been looking at the **first** half of the definition—being separate from sin. We’ve talked about what **sin is in general**, then last week began to narrow it down to **sins in the church**. But even that is a broad topic, so we narrowed it down to just one thing—**pride in the church** as seen in the **wrong motive for service**.

Pretty safe to say **we will not hear**, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” if we do things for the **praise of men**! Anything we **give to God**—whether abilities or gifts—were **from Him in the first place**, so to seek the praise of men for something **God gave us** is to both promote a lie—and to steal praise from God!

This morning we **are again** going to talk about the **sin of pride** in the church. Instead of looking **at motive**, though—which is something we **can hide**; we are going to look at an **indicator of pride** in our life. J. Oswald Sanders, in his book entitled *Spiritual Leadership*, wrote: “Pride is a sin of whose presence its victim is least conscious.” Simply put, we can be a victim of pride and not even know it!

So how **can we tell** if we have pride lurking in our hearts? One way is to evaluate **how we react** when someone corrects us. Think of the different ways we **can** react when someone corrects us.

--Some are **very obvious** and out in the open, like **getting angry** and trying to defend ourselves—or **criticizing the person** who is criticizing us!

--Sometimes we’re more “spiritual” than that and **pretend to consider** what is being said, only **to think to ourselves** when we part company with our critic, ‘Who does so-and-so **think they are**? They need to get the **beam out of their own eye** before they try taking the **speck out of mine**!’

--If we were truly humble, though, we would not just **accept** correction—we would **welcome** it!

Perhaps you heard about the husband who **welcomed** his wife’s rebukes. When she challenged him on some weakness in his character, he **listened** patiently and humbly, **thanked** her for her loving concern, made her remarks a **matter of prayer**, and **changed** his behavior accordingly. Eventually, he became known as “the husband who welcomed his wife’s rebukes.” Have you ever heard of that guy?

Probably not! Do you know why? Because it is **doubtful** that that man **even exists**! Lest you think I came up with this on my own, this illustration is from an article entitled, “The Beauty of a Rebuke,” written by Gary Thomas. Thomas has written more than 20 books, most on marriage and parenting.

[\(https://garythomas.com/2018/03/14/the-beauty-of-a-rebuke/\)](https://garythomas.com/2018/03/14/the-beauty-of-a-rebuke/)

What about us? How do we respond when someone criticizes us and tries to correct us? That is what we are going to be looking at this morning.

I want to start off by saying this—I am **not** preaching on this because I see this **as a problem in our church** right now! I don’t want you sitting there thinking, ‘Hmm; I wonder who Pastor **tried correcting recently** that got mad at him!’ What I **do want you thinking**, though, is how **you personally react** to correction—compared to how you **should react**. Besides, preaching on a topic like this falls into the category of “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure 😊!”

Please take your Bibles and turn to II Chronicles 26 where we have the account of King Uzziah. If you have a super good memory—and you were here at church on March 14th, 2021—I shared with you some things about King Uzziah. Since that was a year ago—and a number of you weren’t here at that time—I want to give you some of the background of this king before we look at how he responded to correction.

BACKGROUND: Saul was the first king of Israel, followed by David. Solomon was next, followed by his son Rehoboam. All 12 tribes were united into one kingdom under the reign of Saul, David, and Solomon, but under Rehoboam, the kingdom split into 2 parts—the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. It **wasn't an even split**, though—10 tribes were in the north and only 2 in the south! The **northern** kingdom was **not the line of David** and never had a good king. The **southern kingdom** was comprised of David's lineage. Sometimes their kings were good; sometimes they were bad.

--In vs 1, we see the people of Judah—which is the **southern kingdom**—taking Uzziah and making him king at the age of 16.

--In vs 4, we see that “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord”

--Now vs 5. “And he sought God in the days of Zechariah” and the end of the verse says, “...and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.”

--Vs 7 “And God helped him against the Philistines...”

--Now jump ahead to the middle of vs 15: “And his name spread far abroad;”—in other words, he became famous—“for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.”

To recap, then, King Uzziah started out doing right in God's sight and God blessed him and helped him against his enemies. But then pride entered his heart—and reared its ugly head.

Vs 16 “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up”—meaning he became proud. Now follow along as I read through verse 18.

Now that we have an understanding of the context, let's notice first...

1. The reason behind correction

Why did Azariah the priest—and fourscore (meaning 80)—other priests go **against King Uzziah** and tell him he needed to “go out of the sanctuary”?

--Vs 16 Because “he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.”

--Vs 18 “And they [the priests] withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense:”

He was being corrected, then, for his **disobedience** to the Word of God! The sin was **not** that he went into the temple—the sin was that he attempted **to do something** that only priests were supposed to do. God had given very specific details regarding **who** was to do **what** in carrying out the duties connected with worship in the **tabernacle during the wilderness days** & now in the **temple** when the kings lived in Jerusalem.

The instructions regarding the “altar of incense” are given in Exodus 30. After giving Moses the **dimensions** of the altar...and what it was to be **made of**...and **where it was to be placed** in the tabernacle, God says this in **Exodus 30:7** “**And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense** every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.”

Aaron wasn't going to live forever, of course, so God had also instructed Moses that whatever duties were assigned to Aaron were to be passed down to his sons.

Uzziah wasn't the **first person** to try to burn incense to God when he wasn't supposed to. Time does not allow us to look in-depth at the account of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in Numbers 16, but the end result was this—God **supernaturally killed these three men** by having the **ground literally open and swallow them alive** (Num 16:31-33)! On top of that, the 250 men that sided with the 3 of them against Moses and Aaron were killed by fire (vs 35)!

To prevent people in the future from doing this, God had Eleazer—Aaron's son—take the censers of the men that were consumed by fire and flatten them into broad plates for a **covering of the altar**.

Num 16:40 tells us **why**: “To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, **that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord**; that he be not as Korah, and as his

company: as the Lord said to him by the hand of Moses.” This was a tangible reminder that not just anyone could burn incense—they had to be a descendant of Aaron.

So, King Uzziah—who God had blessed and helped and prospered when he **obeyed** God—became proud and made a decision to **disobey God** and **presumptuously do something** that he knew **was wrong** to do! And so the priests—the guardians of God’s temple—withstood him and said to “go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed...”

Let’s consider next... **2. The responsibility in giving correction**

I think there are two “ingredients”—for lack of a better word—when we approach someone with a desire to correct them. We see the priests incorporating both of them in their correction of Uzziah.

A. Provide a Biblical basis for the correction

Although the priests did not give king Uzziah the chapter-and-verse as to **why** what he was doing **was wrong**, they certainly were **referring to God’s Word** when they said “It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron...” They were basing what they said **on God’s Word**—not just their personal preference.

I think it is important that we do the same. Your **opinion—and personal preference**—is not God’s Word! If you feel the desire to correct someone, it should be because they are **disobeying God**—not because they are doing something **you don’t like**! You should be able to **show them from God’s Word** the command they are disobeying—or a principle they may be violating.

Another “ingredient” the priests used in correcting Uzziah—although not as obvious—was to...

B. Provide a warning of possible consequences for continued disobedience

Notice the end of vs 18 “...neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.” In other words, ‘God will **not bless you for doing wrong**; you will not be honored. Instead, things **will not go well** for you!’

Did they know what God was about to do? Obviously not! But they **did know** that God punishes willful disobedience!

It is both amazing—and **incredibly sad**—that God’s people can blatantly disobey God and expect God to **ignore their sin**. They know of examples in God’s Word where God punished sin—and they know of friends or relatives that have been chastened by God—and yet they think **they will be just fine**!

Mind-boggling, isn’t it? And yet **some of us think** that very same thing!

--We **believe God knows everything**—and we believe the principle behind **Numbers 32:23** “Be sure your sin will find you out!”—yet **we sin like** we think we are going to **get away with it**!

--We are familiar with the concept behind **Hebrews 12:6** “For whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth,” yet somehow, we think it **doesn’t apply to us**!

--And we believe—**mentally**, anyway—**Galatians 6:7** “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” and yet... somehow...somesay—we think we will reap something **different** than what we sow!

Let me say it again—we **do not know what consequences** God will bring into someone’s life for willful disobedience, but we should at least **warn them** that there will be some!

We’ve seen the reason behind correction...and the responsibility in giving correction. Notice next...

3. The reaction to correction

How did King Uzziah react when the priests asked him not to disobey God’s Word?

A. The wrong response

Vs 19 “Then Uzziah was wroth”—meaning **angry**! That’s what pride does, doesn’t it? It makes people think **irrationally**! The priests knew that Uzziah was **about to do something wrong**—and I believe the king knew, too! The priests warned him that he was **going against God’s Word**—and that there would be **consequences for doing so**—but he wants to “shoot the messengers” instead of listening to them!

What about you and me? How do we respond when someone corrects us? How willing are we to **receive correction**? Uzziah got angry—and refused to stop doing what was wrong until God **struck him with leprosy!** Notice the middle of vs 19 “...and while he was wroth with the priests...”

I know I’ve shared with you before how D.L. Moody asked the following question of a group of men who were gathered at a Bible Conference:

“Brethren, how many of you have so grown in grace that you can bear to have your faults told?” Many hands went up. Quick as a flash, but not sharply or insultingly, Moody turned to a young Episcopal minister in front of him and said: “Brother, you have spoken thirteen times in the three days here, and perhaps shut out twelve other good men from speaking.”

Although the young man had held up his hand, he couldn’t handle being corrected. He did not admit any fault—nor did he show any sorrow—but instead he strongly defended himself which of course made his pride even more apparent.

Someone else then **turned loose on Moody** and berated him for his bluntness. Moody blushed, but listened and when the other man was done, sheepishly said “Brethren, I admit all the fault my friend charges on me; but, brethren, **I did not hold up my hand!**” (The Life of D.L. Moody by His Son; page 368).

We know that the wrong response is to get angry and defensive. Let’s consider lastly, B. The right response

What is the **right** response? A “pat” answer would be: not get angry...consider what is said...and change our behavior if deemed necessary, right? But as I thought about it a little more, it seems to me that the right response is comprised of three steps: one before, one during, and one after.

i. Before correction: Cultivate a humble, teachable spirit

The best way to **respond correctly** when corrected is to **always be ready to be corrected!** And the best way to **be ready for correction** is to continually cultivate a humble, teachable spirit! How do we do that?

- a) Admit that we have not arrived and are not as holy as we can be or should be.
- b) Recognize that we are often blind to our own sin and don’t see it.
- c) Desire sin to be **pointed out** so we can **get it out** because we **want it out!**

But to have sin pointed out, we need to be approachable and teachable.

So are you? Are you approachable because you want sin out—or are you too proud?

Are you teachable because you have things to learn—or are you too proud?

But what I ask of you, I must also ask myself! Am I approachable? Am I teachable?

On Cross-Talk this week, one of the discussions was about the downhill trend of many Bible-preaching churches. There is more **than one reason** as to why this is happening, but a common reason is that Pastors are leading churches astray **by not preaching—or basing decisions on—the Word of God!** And sadly, when God-fearing, God-loving people in the church try to **approach their Pastor** to talk to him about his failure, their Pastor doesn’t want to hear! And so—heart broken—they leave! My wife and I left a church for that very reason many years ago. It has also happened to friends of mine...and maybe it has happened to you.

May God help **us all**—especially me as your Pastor—be approachable and teachable! And if we are cultivating this attitude within us, we are much more likely to **respond rightly** to correction.

ii. During correction: Control your desire to silence the “corrector”

Self-explanatory, right? If you are approachable and teachable, you will be humble enough to know that God uses **all kinds of people** in your life to “correct” you. If you **silence them**, you may miss out on what God is trying to tell **you** through them. So **zip the lip**—and listen!

iii. After the correction: Consider the source—and what was said

To “consider the source” is **not a contradiction** to the truth that God uses all kinds of people to correct us! In fact, I would argue that God **tells us** to consider the source! **Proverbs 27:6** “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

--I take that to mean **be thankful** for what a friend says—even if it hurts! On the other hand, be careful what **your enemy says** because he may be **flattering you** and not telling the truth!

--I think you'd also agree that those that **know you best** can see your "blind spots" better than anyone else can. That means **husbands should welcome** correction from their wives—and **wives should welcome** correction from their husbands!

One last thought **on the source**—which also ties in with what was **said**. Is the person who is correcting you **spiritually minded**? Are they bringing a concern to you based on God's Word—or is it a personal preference?

A neighbor lady of mine was surprised that I would cut wood on a Sunday. In fact, she went so far as to say that the only reason I should start up a chain saw on a Sunday is if a tree was blocking the road and I needed to cut it so that I could drive down the road to get to church!

I didn't silence her—or argue with her—but she didn't really have a Bible-based reason as to why she felt it was wrong for me to cut wood on a Sunday.

So have I cut wood on a Sunday since that conversation? I honestly can't remember if I have or not! But I'm sure at some point that I will—not to purposely annoy her or flaunt my liberty—but because I need wood 😊!

Time to wrap this up. God wants us to be holy; to be separate from sin. One sin that plagues us all is pride. We may not realize it is in us, but it will certainly show itself when we are corrected. May we all cultivate a humble, teachable spirit so we respond rightly to correction. **PRAY**

So, what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First, be honest with the Lord. Has He spoken to you about being proud? If so, ask for forgiveness—and His help in cultivating a humble, teachable spirit.
2. The greatest form of pride, of course, is to choose your way to get to heaven over God's way. There is only one way to be forgiven—and His name is Jesus! John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. It is the epitome of pride to think that **you** will be the exception!