

Standing for Righteousness

"But when he (King Uzziah) 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 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." 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. 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, because the LORD had struck him. 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." (2 Chronicles 26:16-21)

King Uzziah is described by God as a good king of Judah (26:4), but he had an occasion of unfaithfulness that would reap severe consequences. He became prideful that he could do whatever he desired, going into the temple (though he was not qualified by the Law) to burn incense to God.

However, as great as the error by Uzziah is, equally great are the actions of Azariah, the chief priest. It did not matter that it was the king standing before him, he was going to stand for righteousness. Because of his actions, 80 other priests stood with him in confronting the king of the entire land.

We need people like Azariah the priest, who are far less concerned with the position of the individual and far more interested in whether their actions are righteous. We cannot excuse wrongdoing, even by those who have previously done right; nor can we shrink away from standing for righteousness, no matter who is involved. ~~ *Adam Cozort*