

## INTRODUCTION 引言

More or less, we have a tendency to make ourselves the boss. We feel more secure when keeping things under our control. I remember a lesson I learned from a sermon many years ago. It was the first semester when I came to the U.S. Someone introduced me to an American church. For a period of time, my roommate and I attended that church then went to a Chinese church on the same Sunday. We got double blessing from God's Word! I recall one thing the American pastor said in a particular message. He stated that many Christians use God for their personal gain. He was right. Who needs God when everything is smooth-sailing? People usually do not ask God for help unless they are in a trouble they cannot handle. Some people even rely on God to lose weight. Jordan Rubin, author of "The Maker's Diet" is an advocate of the idea. The notion is that we can ask God to give us strength on self-control. People follow the same principle to quit different kinds of addiction. The problem arises when people put their sole focus on getting rid of their struggles. Getting lighter and feeling more energized become the only goals. Those weight-loss evangelists attract even non-believers because their methods work. Their followers do not care whether they seek help from God or some herbs. When the problem is solved, they will move onto the next issue. However, our Lord should be the Master and we are only His servants. We should be used by God for His glory instead of using God to achieve our goals. King Amaziah of Judah is a negative example in that regard. His obedience to God was only out of convenience. He followed God's instructions only when they were consistent with his plans. He quickly pushed God aside when God's way contradicted with his ideas.

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Depended on God 倚靠神

Amaziah depended on God when he began his reign. Let us begin by reading **verse 1-6**. Amaziah was a good king in general. However, Amaziah did not commit to God wholeheartedly. A parallel passage in **2 Kings 14:3** gives us further detail: He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not as his father David had done. In everything he followed the example of his father Joash. David is the gold standard for all the kings. He was far from perfect. He committed adultery and murder. Despite all that, the Lord described David as "a man after God's own heart." David repented when God sent a prophet to condemn him. Amaziah was closer to his dad Joash than David. We studied Joash's stories last week. He obeyed God when his godly mentor was alive. But he quickly fell to idol worship afterward. Amaziah had a good beginning but sad ending too. One of the first few things Amaziah did was to avenge for his dad. Amaziah followed the

teaching of the Law by only punishing the wrongdoers. Next, he strengthened his military force. National defense is a top priority especially in a turbulent time. In the U.S., Department of Defense is the largest government agency with the most employees and the largest budget. Protecting one's own country is an obligation. Since Judah consists of two of the twelve tribes of Israel, Amaziah could only gather three hundred thousand soldiers. Therefore, he hired an extra one hundred thousand fighters from the northern kingdom. While it makes military sense, it was not a wise decision from a spiritual perspective. Continue to read [verse 7-9](#) of the Chronicles passage. God sent a prophet to disapprove the idea. God had decided to reject the northern kingdom because all its kings indulged in idol worship. Judah was destined to fail if it partnered with Israel. God wanted Amaziah to depend on Him instead of soldiers, horses and chariots. The world defines success by wealth, stock prices and fame. We may envy those who have bigger and newer things. God wants us to rely on Him. He has yet to finish writing our life stories. We may lose money, property or opportunity. But we should not lose our faith. Keep trusting the Lord. He will lead the way. Amaziah listened to the advice of the prophet. But he only cared about the money he had already paid. That is a sign that Amaziah put his attention on the wrong spot. The prophet assured the king that God could compensate his loss. God can cause an army to triumph on the battlefield. He can surely give any person a bigger blessing. God gives us a source of income, a place to live, family and friends, etc. God also grants us good health to enjoy life, joy and peace in our hearts, and a living hope for eternity. We should always give thanks to Him for what He gives us, regardless of the sizes and forms. The author tells us that the Israelites who were dismissed were very mad. They were hoping to make more money by defeating enemies and collecting plunder. They vented their anger by killing three thousand civilians in Judah and seizing possessions on their way home. Amaziah paid a huge price for seeking help from Israel. Nevertheless, so far, he depended on God. The Lord then rewarded the king with a victory. Look at [verse 11-12](#). Seir was a city in Edom. The country was to the south of Judah. Back in chapter 21 of the book, Edom rebelled against king Jehoram. He was the great grandfather of Amaziah. Perhaps now Amaziah wanted to reclaim the lost territory. God helped the king win the war. However, this success turned out to be a stumbling block. Continue to read [verse 14-16](#). Amaziah took some despicable souvenir from Edom. It is quite unthinkable for a person who depended on the Lord earlier but committed such foolish mistake. Amaziah knew clearly that those were false gods. But he worshipped them anyway. From now on, he would depend on those idols rather than Jehovah. Whatever we cherish the most may become our idol. Ask yourself two questions. First, what occupies the most of your free time and attention? Second, can you exercise self-control over those activities so that you can spend more time with God? God can help us reprioritize our life to put Him first. God sent a prophet to convict Amaziah. In the ancient world, a deity proved to be more powerful if its worshippers prevailed in a battle. It does not make any sense for Amaziah to pay tribute to losers' gods. It is worse that acquiring a company with inferior sales numbers or signing a coach with a losing record. It would bring more problems than benefits. But the king rejected the counsel. The prophet then revealed God had determined to dethrone the king. Amaziah did not

give glory to Jehovah for his victory. He might brag about the fact he could defeat Edom even without using the one hundred thousand Israelite soldiers. Success can easily lead to temptation. It is when we take pride in our capabilities. We say in our hearts: "I did it myself. This is my career, my money and my possessions." We use God to achieve our goals. He becomes our servant rather than Master. Brothers and sisters: we should always remember to keep God at the center of our lives. We give thanks to Him when we have a success. We give thanks to Him even when we suffer a setback. It is possible that God has some lessons for us to learn from.

## 2. Departed from God 遠離神

Amaziah won a war when he depended on God. Unfortunately, his faithfulness to God only lasted for a season. He quickly departed from God. After Amaziah defeated Edom, he planned his next campaign. Read [verse 17-19](#). Since Amaziah did not want God's counsel, he asked his officials for advice instead. They all agreed with the king. We need to be careful whose opinion we seek. Are you willing to listen to someone who may disagree with you? Or do you only ask people to confirm a decision you have made? True friends will say what you need to hear, not just things you like to hear. Amaziah was only looking for people-pleasers. One of his goals could be retaliation for the Israel soldiers who looted the towns in Judah. But king Jehoash knew Amaziah's ambition. It was an invasion, not a defense. After capturing some land from Edom in the south easily, Amaziah wanted to expand his territory to the north too. However, Israel was no Edom. Jehoash was not shy to ridicule Amaziah: "You may as well stay home and watch TV with your family after dinner. Why look for trouble and bring your country to destruction?" Jehoash quoted a well-known idiom of his time. A thistle is but a bush, whereas a Lebanon Cedar can reach up to 130 feet! The contrast is evident. But Amaziah was not intimidated. God gave Amaziah a final chance to change his mind through the mocking of his enemy. But he was too prideful to budge. Continue to read [verse 20-24](#). God's hand was behind the scene. He did not stop Amaziah from destroying himself and his country. God intended to use a lopsided defeat to discipline Amaziah for worshipping the false gods he took from Edom. Amaziah thought those idols could lead him to a victory. But they turned out to be a burden. Judah suffered a painful loss as a result. First, Amaziah's troop had to run for their lives. Second, Jehoash took captive of Amaziah and brought him back to Jerusalem. Thirdly, the Israel soldiers leveled 600 feet of the city wall, and stole some treasures from the temple and palace. Jehoash wanted Amaziah to witness all the devastations in his capital city. But he and his people could not do anything about it. It was a great humiliation. The closing section of the chapter tells us the final outcome of the king. Amaziah outlived Jehoash for 15 years. But he did not accomplish anything worth mentioning, nor did his people show him any respect. Some people succeeded in killing him in a conspiracy. This king started well but died in a tragic way. Pride can very often blind us from seeing the reality. It inflates our ego and drives us to pursue our goal at all cost. We must bring God into the equation when we make new plans. Does my approach violate any principle clearly stated in the Bible? Will the

effort draw me closer or pull me away from God? Will the result bring glory to God, or just make myself look good? Amaziah's ambition for success led to a complete failure. God's wisest way to deal with arrogant sinners is to let them go their own way. The apostle Paul describes in Romans 1 that sinners ignore God even though they know His existence. How does God respond? Paul says in **Romans 1:28** – Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. Paul uses the phrase “gave them over” three times in the chapter. The idea is that God will not intervene if sinners are too stubborn to turn back. It is like an adventurous boy disregards his parents repeated warning of not jumping on his bed or climbing up on the table. He learns his lesson when he bumps his head. Then dad and mom will say: “I told you so!” But he will try other risky things soon afterward. In the spiritual realm of things, we must seek God's forgiveness before it is too late. We do not want to wait till God tells us: “I told you so!” We need mercy from the Lord to soften our stubborn hearts. God is full of patience. His grace is always new and abundant. God knows that we can be disobedient. But He always waits for us to come home.

## CONCLUSION 結論

We should be used by God for His glory instead of using God to achieve our goals. Jesus is the Lord of our lives. We will be blessed when we follow Him. We need faith to walk with God because we cannot foresee the future. We only have limited knowledge and capability too. We know all those truths. The challenge comes when we have to decide between trusting our instincts or trusting God. It is a learning process to release our grip and let God take over. The final outcome is in His hand. He knows our needs better than we do. Jesus calls us to be His disciples, not just believers. Disciples learn from their Master and follow His instructions. It is never an easy process. A word closely related to disciples is discipline. We discipline ourselves because we look forward to a favorable outcome. It can be exercise, healthy eating habits or learning a new skill. We all like to have a better life. How much more we should desire to have a stronger relationship with God? It takes a commitment to develop a habit of Bible reading, giving thanks to God and attending church meetings. The goal is to draw closer to God. It is not to fulfill an obligation or meet people's expectation. For example, if I do not show up my leader or pastor will chase after me. Rather, it should be a joy to spend time with the Lord and have fellowship with believers. Becoming a Christian is not like buying a product. The manufacturer will stop providing customer service once the warranty has expired. Following Jesus is more like signing up for a membership. You will continue to receive benefits as long as you abide by the terms. God's blessings to us are much better are not only life-time but are also good for eternity.

## INTRODUCTION 引言

或多或少，我們都想要自己當老闆。當我們能夠掌控一切時，我們會更有安全感。我記得我在多年前的一篇講道中學到的一個功課。那是我來美國的第一個學期，有人介紹我去一所美國教會。有一段時間，我和我的室友參加那個教會，然後在同一個星期天去一家華人教會聚會。我們從神的話語中得到雙重祝福！我記得美國牧師在一次信息中說過的一件事。他說，許多基督徒只想使用神達到個人利益。他是對的。當一切都一帆風順時，誰還需要神？人們通常不會向神求助，除非他們遇到自己解決不了的麻煩。我聽說有些人甚至靠神來減肥。喬丹·魯賓 (Jordan Rubin) 是這個想法的倡導者。他的概念是我們可以祈求神給我們力量來控制自己。很多人也是靠同樣的方式戒掉不同的癮。但問題是，人們很容易會把所有的注意力放在解決問題上。減輕體重，或是感覺更有活力成為他們唯一的目標。那些減肥傳道人甚至吸引了非信徒，因為他們的方法有效。人們不在乎尋求神或草藥的幫助。當一個問題解決後，他們就轉移到下一個困難。然而，神應該是我們的主人，我們只是祂的僕人。我們應該是被神使用來榮耀祂，而不是使用神來實現我們的目標。猶大王亞瑪謝就是一個反面的例子。他只是為了個人利益而順服神。當神的指示與他的計劃一致時，他就願意聽從。但當神的吩咐違反他的目標時，他就把神推到一邊。

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Depended on God 倚靠神

亞瑪謝開始作王時倚靠神。讓我們來看第 1-6 節。整體來說，亞瑪謝是一位好王。然而，亞瑪謝並沒有全心全意地委身於神。列王紀下 14 章 3 節給我們進一步的細節：**亞瑪謝行耶和華眼中看為正的事，但不如他祖大衛，乃效法他父約阿施一切所行的。**大衛是所有君王的模範。他遠非完美。他犯了姦淫罪和謀殺罪。儘管如此，主還是形容大衛是個「合神心意的人」。當神派先知責備大衛時，大衛便悔改。亞瑪謝的行為比較接近他父親約阿施，而不像大衛。上週我們看了約阿施的生平。當他敬虔的導師在世時，他便順服神。但後來他很快就陷入了偶像敬拜。同樣，亞瑪謝也有一個美好的開始，卻是慘淡收場。亞瑪謝最初做的幾件事之一就是為他父親報仇。亞瑪謝遵照



律法的教導，只懲罰犯罪的人。其次，他加強了他的軍事力量。國防是重要的考慮，尤其是在動盪時期。在美國，國防部是最大的政府機構，擁有最多的僱員和最大的預算。保護自己的國家是一項義務。由於猶大是以色列十二個支派中的兩個組成，亞瑪謝只能聚集三十萬士兵。於是，他從北國僱用了十萬名戰士。雖然這個安排看來合理，但從屬靈的角度來看，並不是一個明智的決定。繼續閱讀歷代志下的**第 7-9 節**。神派了一位先知來反對這個做法。神決定棄絕北國，因為它的所有王都敬拜偶像。如果猶大與以色列結盟，它注定要失敗。神要亞瑪謝倚靠祂，而不是依靠兵馬和戰車。這個世界以財富、股票價格和名望來定義成功。我們可能會羨慕那些擁有許多金錢和物質的人。神要求我們倚靠祂。祂還沒有寫完我們的人生故事。我們可能會失去金錢、財產或機會。但我們不應該失去信心。繼續信靠主。祂會帶領我們。亞瑪謝聽從了先知的勸告。但他只關心自己已經付過的錢。這表明亞瑪謝把注意力放在了錯誤的地方。先知向王保證，神會補償他的損失。神可以使軍隊在戰場上取得勝利，祂也一定可以給人更大的祝福。神賜給我們收入來源、住處、家人和朋友等。神也賜給我們健康，讓我們享受生活、心中的喜樂與平安，以及永生的活潑盼望。我們應該為神賜給我們的一切感謝祂。作者告訴我們，被解僱的以色列軍人非常生氣。他們以為可以通過擊敗敵人收集擄物而撈一筆。他們在回家的路上殺害了三千個猶大平民，並奪取他們的財物，以此來洩憤。亞瑪謝向以色列尋求幫助，付出了高昂的代價。儘管如此，到目前為止，他仍然依靠神。於是，神讓亞瑪謝在戰場上得勝。請看**第 11-12 節**。西珥是以東的一座城。該國在猶大的南面。在第 21 章中，以東背叛了約蘭王。他是亞瑪謝的曾祖父。或許現在亞瑪謝想收復失地。神幫助王贏得了戰爭。然而，這一次成功卻成為了他的絆腳石。繼續閱讀**第 14-16 節**。亞瑪謝從以東拿了一些不該拿的紀念品。他之前倚靠神，現在卻犯了如此愚蠢的錯誤，實在是不可思議。亞瑪謝清楚地知道那些是假神，但他卻選擇敬拜它們。從此之後，他依靠那些偶像，而不是依靠耶和華。凡是我們最珍惜的東西，都可能成為我們的偶像。我們需要問自己兩個問題。首先，什麼佔據了你最多的時間和注意力？其次，你能不能自律，不讓這些事情妨礙你和神的關係？神樂意幫助我們調整生活的優先次序，把神放在首位。神差遣一位先知去責備亞瑪謝。在古代世界，一個國家在戰事中獲勝，就表示它的神明是更利害的。亞瑪謝向失敗者的神致敬是難以想像的。這就像收購一家業績不佳的公司或和一位輸多贏少的教練簽約。它帶來的問題多於好處。但亞瑪謝拒絕了先知的警告。先知隨後透露神已決定厭棄他。亞瑪謝並沒有因他的勝利而將榮耀歸給耶和華。他可能會吹噓，即使不使用十萬以色列士兵，他也能打敗以東。成功很容易帶來試探。我們可能為自己的能力感

到自豪。我們在心裡說：「這是我的個人成就。這是我的事業、我的金錢和我的財產。」我們使用神來實現我們的目標。祂成為我們的僕人而不是主人。弟兄姊妹：我們必須讓神成為我們生命的中心。當我們成功時，我們要感謝祂。即使我們遭受挫折，我們也要感謝祂。神可能有一些要我們學習的功課。

## 2. Departed from God 遠離神

亞瑪謝依靠神贏得了一場勝仗。可惜的是，他對神的忠誠只持續了一段時間。他很快就遠離神。亞瑪謝打敗以東後，他計劃下一次戰役。請讀第 17-19 節。由於亞瑪謝不想聽神的指示，他向官員徵求意見。他們都同意王的想法。我們需要注意我們向誰尋求意見。你願意傾聽不同的建議嗎？還是你只想別人支持你的決定？真正的朋友會說你需要聽的話，而不是你想聽的話。亞瑪謝只是在尋找會拍馬屁的人。他的目標之一可能是報復掠奪猶大城鎮的以色列士兵。但約阿施王知道亞瑪謝的野心。這場戰爭是侵略，而不是防禦。亞瑪謝輕易地從南方的以東奪取了一些土地後，他想要往北方擴展領土。然而，以色列不是以東。約阿施毫不留情地嘲笑亞瑪謝：「吃完晚飯後，你不如留在家裡和家人一起看電視。為什麼自找麻煩，連累你的國家？」約阿施引用了當時流行的一句諺語。蒺藜不過是灌木，而黎巴嫩的香柏樹可以長到 130 英尺高！對比是很明顯的。但亞瑪謝並沒有被嚇倒。神通過敵人的嘲笑給亞瑪謝最後一次回頭的機會。但他太驕傲了，無法讓步。繼續閱讀第 20-24 節。神在幕後掌管一切。祂沒有阻止亞瑪謝做笨事。神打算讓亞瑪謝慘敗來懲罰他敬拜從以東奪來的假神。亞瑪謝以為那些偶像可以使他取得勝利，但結果他反而被連累。猶大遭受了嚴重的損失。首先，亞瑪謝的軍隊不得不逃命。其次，約阿施擄走了亞瑪謝，帶他回耶路撒冷。第三，以色列士兵將 600 英尺的城牆夷為平地，並從聖殿和皇宮偷走了一些財寶。約阿施希望亞瑪謝親眼目睹所有的災難，但他和他的人民卻無力反抗。這是極大的恥辱。本章的結尾部分告訴我們亞瑪謝的結局。亞瑪謝比約阿施多活了 15 年。但他並沒有做出任何值得一提的事情，他的人民也沒有對他表示尊重。最終一些人通過陰謀成功殺死了他。這位王有好的開始，但以悲劇收場。驕傲常常使我們看不到現狀。它使我們自我膨脹，驅使我們不惜一切代價追求我們的目標。當我們定新的計劃時，必須從神的角度作考慮。我的做法有沒有違反聖經中明確的原則？我的成就會使我更接近神還是讓我遠離神？結果會否榮耀神，還是只會讓我炫耀自己？亞瑪謝的野心導致他徹底的失敗。神對付狂妄的罪人最明智的方法是讓他們我行我素。使徒保羅在羅馬

書第 1 章描述，罪人即使知道神的存在，也無視祂。神如何回應？保羅在羅馬書 1:28 中說：他們既然故意不認識神，神就任憑他們存邪僻的心，行那些不合理的事。保羅在這一章中三次使用「任憑」這個詞語。意思是，如果罪人太頑固而無法省悟，神也不會去干預。這就像一個冒險的男孩不理會父母反覆地警告他不要在床上跳或是不要爬上桌子。當他撞到頭時，他才汲取到教訓。然後爸媽會說：「我不是跟你講過嗎？」但他很快便忘記，然後嘗試其他冒險的事情。在屬靈的領域裡，我們必須在為時已晚之前尋求神的赦免。不要等到神說：「我不是跟你講過嗎？」我們需要主的憐憫來軟化我們頑固的心。神是滿有耐心的。祂的恩典永遠是新的而且是豐盛的。神知道我們會不聽話。但祂總是等著我們回家。

## CONCLUSION 結論

我們應該是被神使用來榮耀祂，而不是使用神來實現我們的目標。耶穌是我們生命的主。我們跟隨祂就會蒙福。當我們與神同行時，我們需要信心，因為我們無法預知未來。我們的知識和能力也非常有限。我們都知道這些道理。真正的挑戰是決定要相信自己的直覺還是相信神。選擇放手讓神來接管是一個學習的過程。我們必須明白最終的結局是掌握在神的手中。祂比我們更了解我們的需要。耶穌呼召我們成為祂的門徒，而不僅僅是信徒。門徒向他們的師父學習並遵循他的指示。這從來都不是一個容易的過程。與門徒密切相關的一個詞語是紀律。我們自律是因為我們期待一個美好的結果。可能是鍛煉身體、健康的飲食習慣或學習新技能。我們都喜歡有更好的生活。我們不是應該更渴望與神建立緊密的關係嗎？養成讀聖經、感謝神和參加教會聚會的習慣需要委身。目標是與神更親近，而不是為了履行義務或滿足別人的期望。例如，如果我不出席聚會，領袖或牧師會來追蹤我。與主在一起和與信徒交流應該帶來喜樂。成為基督徒不像購買一件產品。保用期過後，製造商便停止提供客戶服務。跟隨耶穌比較像是註冊會員。只要你遵守條款，你會繼續享受福利。神對我們的祝福不只是終身的，而且是永恆的。