

引言 INTRODUCTION

It is a humbling experience to realize you are not as important as you think you are. Some kids were in a children's service. The message was about sheep. The pastor told the young ones that sheep are fragile animals. They can wander around and do dumb things. They need a lot of protection and guidance. It is a shepherd's duty to watch over his sheep. The pastor told the kids that they were like sheep and needed supervision too. He then asked: "If you are sheep then who is your shepherd?" The pastor expected the answer to be him. A little boy raised his hand after a moment of silence: "I know! Jesus is the shepherd." The man was surprised. Next, he followed up with another question: "If Jesus is the shepherd, then who am I?" The child pondered for a few seconds and replied: "I guess if Jesus is the shepherd, then you must be a sheep dog." Very often, we can learn from children because they always say what is on their hearts. The issue with this pastor is pride. In our story today, king Uzziah was a man like that. He followed the examples of his father and grandfather. All three kings obeyed God and had a good beginning. However, they became proud after they had some success. Just like his ancestors, Uzziah stumbled in his pride. God does not only give us with talents, He also wants to shape our hearts to be like Him. Those who submit under the Lord will be elevated by Him.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 被神嘉獎 Rewarded by God

Uzziah had a bright future when he became a king. In fact, he was rewarded by God due to his faithfulness. Let us read **verse 3 to 5** to get some background. Uzziah had the second longest reign in the history of Judah. A longer period in power does not necessarily mean a person was a good king. Manasseh ruled for 55 years. But he was an evil king in the eyes of the Lord. Regardless, longevity is surely God's blessing. Just like his father and grandfather, Uzziah had a godly advisor named Zechariah to help him. The Bible does not elaborate on his position. He could be a prophet who conveyed information from God to the king. God blessed the work of Uzziah when he listened to Him. The author then outlines Uzziah's accomplishments. Continue to read **verse 6 to 8**. God helped Uzziah overcome his enemies. The cities and nations mentioned in the section cover the areas around Judah. They either lost to Uzziah in battles, or paid tribute to him to avoid a conflict. Since his country enjoyed a time of peace, Uzziah could focus on internal affairs. Look at **verses 9 and 10**. Uzziah's dad, king Amaziah, lost an embarrassing battle to Israel. The northern troop knocked down 600 feet of city wall in Jerusalem. Now Uzziah built towers in the capital city and other locations. Perhaps he repaired the wall too. The king also supervised the agricultural industry. He dug cisterns, which are reservoirs to collect rain water. It is a critical resource in a desert region. The author also mentions that the king enjoyed gardening. Besides the external and internal matters, God also gave Uzziah success in strengthening his military. Let us skip down to

verse 13 to 15. The author states that Uzziah had a well-equipped army. He even had some experts in the R&D department to invent a new weapon. It looked like a projectile machinery that could launch arrows and large stones. That would surely give Judah an edge in warfare. The author gives the same comment twice in the passage: Uzziah became strong and famous. Up to this point, Uzziah's heart was on the Lord. God gladly blessed Uzziah's efforts. His people enjoyed a stable and abundant life. God will make us prosper when obey Him. It is a general promise in the Bible. But God never guarantees everyone fame and fortune, as well as health and long-life. We can think of many rich Biblical characters like Abraham, David or Solomon. But there were also people like Job, Jesus' disciples or Paul who suffered greatly for their faith. However, there is no doubt that success in any form is God's blessing. There is nothing wrong to buy a bigger house, eat at elegant restaurants or go on fancy vacation if you can afford the bills. The question is not how much God gives us. Rather, it is how we use what God gives us. There are many Christian organizations that serve the Lord in different ways. One thing in common is that they all need financial support. Every now and then they will do a fund raising. I admire some anonymous donors who promise to double the amount other people contribute. They have the capability and generosity to help. But they want to motivate more Christians to give. They conceal their identities because they want to give God all the glory. The prosperity gospel is unbiblical because everything is about ourselves. It teaches people to pray for more money and more stuff so that they can live a happier life. We will be greedy for more if we put the sole focus on ourselves. Jesus told a parable about a landlord who had a great harvest. He had so much grain that he had to tear down his barns and build larger ones. He smiled from his heart when he pondered on the many years to relax with plentiful food. Just then a voice spoke from above. **Luke 12:20-21** say: 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." What an irony! What is the point of hoarding wealth for the future when he could not even live through tomorrow? God advises us to focus on Him. There is something more important than wealth and pleasure. We need to make plans for our souls. Those who do not know Christ need to receive Him before it is too late. Life is short and full of unknowns. As for our brothers and sisters: we need to invest our resources on things that have lasting values. We plan for retirement and our family. But God wants to bless others through us. We can support various Christian organizations financially to spread the gospel. We can contribute our time for ministries. We should also seize the opportunities God gives us. You may run into the same seeker friends in your work place, campus or neighborhood. You may be the only Christian they meet regularly. They are the non-believers God asks you to reach out to.

2. 被神厭棄 Rejected by God

So far Uzziah had a successful career. He was rewarded by God for his obedience. However, Uzziah's loyalty to God did not last long. Eventually, he was rejected by God. **Verse 16 to 18** tell us a major reason for his downfall. There is a Chinese saying that is relevant here: it may not be a good thing for a person to become famous, or for a pig to get fat. Very often, pride comes with success. There is a tendency to forget God when we believe that we can achieve

everything by ourselves. Uzziah fell into that trap. The word “unfaithful” appears in both verses 16 and 18 can be understood as “trespassing.” Uzziah wanted to cross the boundary to do what he was not qualified to do. Any Israelite could enter the temple court and bring an animal for a priest to offer on the altar. However, the altar of incense was inside the temple building, which only the priests were allowed to enter. Azariah and eighty other priests tried to stop the king. It takes great boldness to challenge one’s boss. The priests did not hesitate to warn the king that he would not be honored by God. That implied God would judge him. We all can use some brave counselors like those priests. They understood that there was a Leader higher than an earthly leader. Uzziah would not welcome people to treat his palace like a tourist attraction. Now he tried to enter God’s temple! Today, anyone can go into the White House for a visit. But certain areas are restricted. The President works and his family lives there. Uzziah wanted to override God’s rules. His attitude was: no one can tell me what to do. We often see that mentality among famous people. At the peak of the pandemic, many states enforced lockdown mandates. Some government officials, even mayors and governors were caught having parties or eating at restaurants with friends. They broke the rules they signed! It is all about pride and power. They showed that they were above the law. We can be rebellious too because we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. In Genesis, God told the couple specifically that they were not allowed to eat the forbidden fruits. They did it anyway. Then sin entered the world. Sin is simply breaking God’s law. The fallen world may try to argue over definitions. But by God’s designs there are only two genders, life begins at conception, every family has a father and a mother and human life is sacred because we are created after God’s image. Winning by voting or in a court ruling cannot make a wrong thing right. Eventually, God will demand an answer if we violate His law. The priests were courageous enough to convict Uzziah. But the king would not listen. Continue to read **verses 19 and 20**. Uzziah was mad, wondering how dare the priests to block him. When a person does not want to learn a lesson the right way, then he will learn it the hard way. God intervened and inflicted Uzziah with leprosy. We mentioned in the past that leprosy in the Bible can refer to any skin disease. Either the king felt something unusual or some priests saw something odd on his forehead. Everyone knew it was God’s judgment on Uzziah for intruding into the holy ground. The king quickly left the scene. The disease turned out to be a curse from God. We will finish reading **verse 21 to 23**. Uzziah’s leprosy lingered on for the rest of his life. He had to be isolated. He could not even go back to the palace. His son took over the duties as a king. Leprosy was more than a bad-looking skin. Nowadays, some young people prefer to stay home if their pimples are getting out of control. When I was at their age, zits often popped up on my nose. How embarrassing! To the Israelites, leprosy was more than a health problem. It was also a relational and spiritual issue. Patients were considered unclean and were not allowed to worship God. There are two full chapters in Leviticus that describes in detail about leprosy – how to diagnose the illness, quarantine the patients, clean their clothes and even houses, and the required ceremony before recovered patients could return to the community. **Leviticus 13:45-46** mandate: 45 “The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ 46 As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.” Imagine a year ago when you walked on the street, someone coming toward you raising his voice, saying: “COVID! COVID!” Everyone would immediately look for a place to hide. Uzziah might think that he was above

the law when he tried to play a priest. But now no exemption was given because he was but a leper! Uzziah's position and power were taken away. But most importantly, he was rejected by God. Uzziah forgot that God put him there to lead his people by a godly example. Since he did not want to live in humility, God made him to live in humiliation. God loves the humble people. For example, **James 4:6** says: But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." God wants us to realize that every blessing is from Him. God gives us breath of life so that we can get up next morning. He also enables us to conduct our lives. Schools and teachers can convey knowledge. But God gives us mental capacity to learn. We acquire skills and experience at work. But God maintains our health to work. Only a humble person will give thanks to God. Every morning when you open your eyes, thank God for a new day. When you sit at the dining table, thank God that someone cooks for you and you have an appetite to enjoy the food. When you receive your pay check or report card, thank God for your hard work. We will stay humble if we see everything as a gift, not a wage. A wage is something we earn. We will crave for more if we think we earn everything. But our life is a gift from God. He wants us to enjoy His blessings with gratitude. Everything we have is from Him and for Him.

結論 CONCLUSION

The experience of Uzziah tells us that those who submit under the Lord will be elevated by Him. Remember the story I told you at the beginning about sheep, shepherd and sheep dog? There is actually a lot we can learn from sheep dogs. They are loyal, diligent and obedient. Sheep are scared of sheep dogs. But the dogs know that they only carry out orders from the shepherd. The dogs and sheep both listen to the shepherd. They just play different roles. Let me conclude with a story I read somewhere. Canute was a young prince in Denmark around AD 1000. It was the era when the Vikings roamed in northern Europe. Canute became famous when he dominated not only over his home country, but also England then Norway. People honored this great king with praise. While Canute was a powerful ruler, he was also a godly man. A story was told that Canute got tired of all the flattery words people said to him. One day, he asked his officials to put his chair by a beach. The king then yelled at the sea and demanded the tide to stop rising. Of course, the waves kept splashing and his robe got wet. Afterward, Canute walked to a church and went inside. There was a statue of Christ nailing on a cross displayed on the back wall. Canute took off his crown, put it on the head of Christ, and never worn it again. Today, we can hold onto our crown and behave like a king. But we can also surrender our crown to Jesus and live as His servant.

引言 INTRODUCTION

當你明白你並沒有你所想像的那麼重要時，你就不得不謙卑下來。有一群小孩參加兒童崇拜。當天的信息是關於綿羊。牧師告訴孩子們，羊是脆弱的動物。牠們會到處徘徊，做笨事情。牠們需要別人的保護和引導。牧羊人的責任就是要看守他的羊。牧師告訴孩子們，他們就像羊，也需要監督。然後他問道：「如果你們是羊，那麼誰是牧羊人？」牧師預計答案是他。一個小男孩想了一會後舉起他的手：「我知道！耶穌是牧羊人。」牧師覺得很驚訝。接下來，他又問：「如果耶穌是牧羊人，那麼我是誰？」孩子思考了幾秒鐘後回答：「我想如果耶穌是牧羊人，那麼你便是一隻牧羊狗。」我們應該常常向孩子們學習，因為他們總是說出心裡的話。這個牧師有一點驕傲。在今天的故事中，烏西雅王就是這樣的一個人。他效法他父親和祖父的榜樣。所有三個王剛開始時都順服神。然而，當他們稍有成就之後，他們便驕傲起來。就像他的祖先一樣，烏西雅被自己的驕傲所絆倒。神不僅給我們聰明才智，祂也希望塑造我們的心更像祂。神樂意提升那些謙卑在祂面前的人。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 被神嘉獎 Rewarded by God

烏西雅剛開始成為王的時候前途一片光明。由於他的忠誠，他被神嘉獎。讓我們閱讀**第 3 至 5 節**來了解一些背景。烏西雅是在猶大的歷史上統治時期第二長的君王。在位的時間長並不一定表示那個人是好王。瑪拿西統治了 55 年。但他是耶和華眼中看為惡的王。無論如何，長壽肯定是神的祝福。就像他的父親和祖父一樣，烏西雅有一個敬虔的顧問來幫助他。他名叫撒迦利亞。聖經沒有詳細說明他的背景。他可能是一位先知，將神的信息傳達給王。當烏西雅聽從神之時，神便祝福他的工作。接下來作者引述了烏西雅的成就。繼續閱讀**第 6 節至 8 節**。神幫助烏西雅打敗他的敵人。經文中提到的城市和國家都在猶大的周圍。它們要不然被烏西雅消滅，要不然向他進貢，以避免衝突。當他的國家享受太平時，烏西雅可以專注於內政。請看**第 9 和第 10 節**。烏西雅的爸爸亞瑪謝王之前輸給以色列。北國的部隊拆毀了耶路撒冷 600 英尺的城牆。現在烏西雅在首都和其他地方建造城樓。也許他亦修復了城牆。王並且監督農業事務。他挖了水井，用來收集雨水。那是在沙漠地區的重要資源。作者還提到王喜歡園藝。除了外部和內部各事項之外，神也幫助烏西雅加強國防實力。讓我們跳到

第 13 節至 15 節。作者指出烏西雅有一個裝備充足的軍隊。他甚至有一些專家研究新武器。它看起來像一個可以發射箭和大石頭的機械。這肯定會使猶大在戰場上有優勢。作者在經文中重覆同樣的描述：烏西雅的名聲傳到遠方，他甚是強盛。到目前為止，烏西雅的心是向著神。神也樂意祝福烏西雅。他的人民享受穩定和繁榮的生活。當我們遵守神的吩咐時，祂會祝福我們。這是聖經中普遍的應許。當然神從來沒有保證每個人都會大富大貴，或是健康和長壽。我們可以想到一些富有的聖經人物，如亞伯拉罕、大衛或所羅門。但是約伯、耶穌的門徒或保羅因著信仰而遭遇苦難。然而，毫無疑問，任何形式的成功都是神的祝福。如果你能負擔得起，你可以買一幢更大的房子、到高級的餐廳吃飯，或去豪華旅行。問題不是神給我們多少，而是我們如何使用神給我們的東西。有許多基督徒機構以不同的方式為主服務。它們的一個共同點是需要財政支持。每隔一段時間它們便會辦籌款活動。我特別敬佩一些匿名的支持者，他們願意將其他人捐款的金額增加一倍。他們有經濟能力和慷慨的心去幫助事工。但他們希望激勵更多基督徒參與奉獻。他們不公開自己的身份，因為他們想要給神所有的榮耀。成功神學之所以違反聖經，因為它把注意放在人的身上。它鼓勵人們向神求更多的金錢和物質，這樣他們就可以過著更舒服的生活。如果我們只想到自己，我們便會變得更貪心。耶穌告訴一個比喻，說一個財主大豐收。他有很多的收成，因此必須拆掉原來的倉庫再蓋更大的。他想到有豐富的食物可以慢慢享受時，不禁從心裡笑出來。然後他聽到天上有聲音向他說話。路加福音 12:20-21 說：**20「神卻對他說：『無知的人哪，今夜必要你的靈魂；你所預備的要歸誰呢？』21 凡為自己積財，在神面前卻不富足的，也是這樣。」**多麼諷刺！他根本無法活到明天，囤積財富又有什麼用？神希望我們定睛在祂身上。有些東西比財富和享樂更重要。我們需要為自己的靈魂作打算。仍未信耶穌的人要趁早接受主。生命其實很短暫，而且充滿未知數。至於我們的弟兄姐妹：我們必須投資在有永恆價值的事情上。我們應該為家人和退休作打算。但神希望通過我們祝福他人。我們可以支持一些基督徒機構傳福音。我們可以參與服事。我們還應該抓住神給我們的機會。你在工作場所或社區遇到一些福音朋友。你可能是他們經常見面的唯一基督徒。他們是神給你的傳福音對象。

2. 被神厭棄 Rejected by God

到目前為止，烏西雅是個成功的王。因為他的順服，他被神嘉獎。然而，烏西雅對神的忠誠並沒有持續很長的時間。最終，他被神厭棄了。**第 16 至 18 節**告訴我們他跌倒的主要原因。這裡讓我想到一句俗語：人怕出名，豬怕肥。成功常常會使人驕傲。當我們以為自己很了不起時，便覺得不需要神了。烏西雅就是墮進了這個陷阱。在 16 和 18 節中都出現「干犯」這個字，它可以被理解為「

闖入」。烏西雅嘗試越過界線，做他沒有資格做的事情。任何以色列人都可以進入聖殿的外院，帶一隻動物給祭師獻祭。然而，香壇是在聖殿的大樓裡面，只有祭司可以進入。亞撒利雅和其他八十個祭師試圖阻止王。要挑戰你的老闆需要很大的膽量。祭司毫不猶豫地警告王，他的行為是不會被神認可的。他們暗示神會審判他。我們都需要像那些祭師那樣勇敢的顧問。他們明白有一位天上的領袖遠超過地上的領袖。烏西雅不會歡迎人們像遊客一樣參觀他的宮殿，更何況是神的殿！今天任何人都可以進入白宮遊覽。但某些地區是不開放的，因為總統和他的家人住在那裡。烏西雅想要越過神的規定。他的態度是：沒有人能告訴我應該怎麼做。常常有些社會名人會抱同樣的心態。在大流行的巔峰期，許多州強制居家要求。一些政府官員，甚至市長和州長被抓到參加派對或在餐館吃飯。他們違反了自己簽署的規則！這反映出人的驕傲和權力。他們表明自己是在法律之上。每個人都有叛逆的傾向，因為我們都是亞當和夏娃的後代。在創世紀中，神特別警告這對夫婦不可以吃禁果。但是他們照樣做了。然後罪便進入了世界。罪就是破壞神的律法。這個墮落的世界會試圖爭論定義。但是，神的設計只有兩種性別，生命是從受孕開始，每個家庭都應該有一個父親和一個母親，人的生命是有尊嚴的，因為我們是按照神的形象而被創造的。就算在投票或在法庭裁決中獲勝也不能把錯的事情變成對。最終，如果我們違反神的標準，神會跟我們算帳。祭司勇敢地阻止烏西雅，但是王卻不願意聽。繼續閱讀第 19 和 20 節。烏西雅很生氣，祭司竟然敢攔住他。當一個人不接受好言相勸時，他便要吃苦頭。神使烏西雅得了大麻風。我們以前提過，聖經中的大麻風可以是指任何的皮膚病。可能是王覺得有些不對勁或是祭師看到他的額頭出現奇怪的狀況。他們知道神在審判烏西雅闖入聖殿。王馬上離開現場。這場疾病成為神對他的咒詛。我們將完成閱讀第 21 至 23 節。烏西雅的大麻風持續到他離世為止。他必須被隔離，甚至無法回到皇宮。於是他的兒子接管王的事務。大麻風不僅僅是難看。如今，有些年輕人如果長青春痘失控，他們會寧願留在家裡。當我在年青的時候，青春痘經常長在鼻子上。多麼尷尬！對以色列人來說，大麻風不僅僅是一個健康問題，而且也是一個人際關係和屬靈的問題。病人會被認為是不潔淨的，不允許敬拜神。利未記有整整兩章的經文詳細談論大麻風：如何診斷、隔離患者、清潔衣服、甚至房屋，以及病人在康復後所需的儀式使他們可以回到社區。利未記 13:45-46 指出：45 「身上有長大癩瘋災病的，他的衣服要撕裂，也要蓬頭散髮，蒙著上唇，喊叫說：『不潔淨了！不潔淨了！』46 災病在他身上的日子，他便是不潔淨；他既是不潔淨，就要獨居營外。」想像一年前，當你走在街上時，有人向著你喊叫說：「新冠病毒！新冠病毒！」每個人肯定會趕快找地方躲起來。烏西雅想要超越律法，執行祭師的任務。但如今他也不能被豁免，因為他只是一個大麻風病人！烏西雅的頭銜和特權全被奪走了。但最重要的是，他被神厭棄了。烏西雅忘記是神把

他放在那個位置，希望他藉著敬虔的榜樣帶領他的人民。由於他不願意謙卑下來，神讓他蒙羞。神喜歡謙卑的人。例如，雅各書 4:6 說：**但他賜更多的恩典，所以經上說：神阻擋驕傲的人，賜恩給謙卑的人。**神希望我們明白各樣祝福都是從祂而來的。神給我們生命氣息，讓我們早上可以起床。祂使我們能夠享受生活。學校和老師傳遞知識，但是神給我們學習的頭腦。我們在工作中獲得技能和經驗，但是神賜我們健康的身體去工作。只有謙卑的人才會感謝神。每天早上當你睜開眼睛時，為新的一天感謝神。當你坐在餐桌旁時，感謝神有人為你做飯，感謝神賜你有胃口享受美食。當你拿到工資時，為辛勤工作的成果感謝神。如果我們將一切視為恩典而不是工資，我們將保持謙卑。工資是賺來的。如果我們以為靠自己的勞力賺到了一切，我們就會渴望賺更多。但我們的生命是神賞賜的禮物。祂希望我們懷著感恩的心享受祂的祝福。我們所有的一切都是來自於祂，也是為了祂。

結論 CONCLUSION

烏西雅的經歷告訴我們，神樂意提升那些謙卑在祂面前的人。還記得我一開始時講的關於羊、牧羊人和牧羊狗的故事嗎？其實我們可以向牧羊狗學習。牠們忠心、勤奮和聽話。羊怕牧羊狗。但狗知道牠們只是執行牧羊人的命令。狗和羊都聽牧羊人的吩咐。他們只是扮演不同的角色。我在某處讀到的一個故事。大約在公元後 1000 年左右有一個年輕的丹麥王子名叫克努特。那是維京人在北歐稱霸的時代。克努特不僅統治了自己的祖國，而且也統治了英國和挪威。人們稱讚這位偉大的國王。雖然克努特是一位能幹的領袖，但他也是一個敬虔的人。有一個故事說，克努特厭倦人們對他說奉承話。一天，他要求官員把他的椅子放在海邊。國王隨後對海大喊，要求潮汐停止上漲。當然，海浪不停地拍打著，他的袍子都濕了。隨後，克努特走到一座教堂，然後進去。牆上掛了一個釘十字架的基督雕像。克努特摘下自己的王冠，戴在基督的頭上。從此之後，他再也沒有戴過王冠。今天，我們可以緊握著王冠，活得像個王。但我們也可以將冠冕交給耶穌，成為祂的僕人。