

“Amaziah: The Wholly Half-Hearted King”
Who’s the Boss? – A series on the Kings
2 Chronicles 25

Introduction: Take your Bibles and turn to 2 Chronicles 25, 2 Chronicles chapter 25.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to attend your funeral? What would others say about you? I know this is a terribly morbid question to ask right after the joy of the Christmas season, but really, have you ever wondered what your funeral would be like?

There were three men who got into that very conversation one day. One of them said to the group – what do you want people to say at your funeral? The first guy waxed eloquent about how he hopes his kids remember him as the best father a child could have. The second guy said that he hopes people remember him as generous and loving and easy to get along with. To which the third guy said, I hope at my funeral that someone says – “Look, He’s moving!” Some of you will get that on the way home today.

As we look out over a year that is gone and a new one that is beginning this is a very fitting question to ask – what do you want your obituary to say? One of the tremendous benefits of the calendar being flipped from one year to the next is that it gives us a natural pause in which we should consider the course of our life over the last 12 months. Our thankfulness for God’s faithfulness through another year should be coupled with a self-examination of the course of our life. So, one of the questions you should ask yourself is what if I were to die in 2014? What would be said about you? More important than that question is what would God’s opinion of your life be? As much as we would love to listen in on the conversations that our family and friends will have after our time on earth is done, how much more should we be concerned about what our life looks like in the eyes of the Lord.

Our study of the Kings of Israel has provided some very insightful case studies in this very thing. Just think about the reality that we are studying God’s obituary on each of these kings. What we have in the text of Scripture about each man’s life and reign is exactly what God wanted us to know about them. Each detailed account also gives us a clear look into what God thought about each man’s life. In fact, in our text this morning we will see a king with whom there is no doubt about God’s appraisal of his life. Let’s Read verses 1-2. Amaziah became king after the treacherous and disastrous end of his father Joash. You remember Joash of Judah don’t you? He was the boy king who was saved by the courageous acts of his aunt Jehoshabeath and he was crowned king at the young age of 7. You will remember that Joash was highly influenced by Jehoiada to follow the Lord and to even restore the Temple and bring reforms to Judah’s public worship of God. But then after Jehoiada died Joash went his own way worshiped idols and worst of all blatantly refused the word of the Lord through Zechariah, Jehoiada’s son, and even had Zechariah executed. This all led to the assassination of Joash by two of his servants and then to the appointing of Joash’s son, Amaziah to reign as king. Just like Joash we will see a man in Amaziah who seems to start well and finish poorly. He gets some things right and some things terribly wrong.

It is important for the Chronicler to be making these stories known to the original recipients of the book of 1 and 2 Chronicles. You will remember that this Chronicler has been moved by the Spirit of God to pen the history of the nation of Israel. And he is writing at a time when the nation is on their way back to the land after they had been carried off into exile by Nebuchadnezzar. They have heard the decree of Cyrus, the king of Persia that they are to return and rebuild the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. As they prepare to return and as they re-establish themselves in the land it is of vital importance that they remember their history. When they sought the Lord in the past they were blessed by God and enjoyed his protection and care. When they abandoned singular worship of Yahweh God they suffered the promised wrath of the covenant. So in other words, this return to the land as God's people will require whole hearted devotion to God, just like David charged Solomon with before David passed off the scene and just like Solomon charged the people with at the first dedication of the Temple. And there are plenty of examples in Israel's past kings to show them what a half-hearted devotion to God looks like and why it should be avoided. And so, this is the case with Amaziah. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart. What a damning statement! Would you want that to be said in your obituary? John Marvin Williams was a man who loved the Lord and did what was right in his eyes, but not with a whole heart! None of us would aim for that to be our God-ordained obituary. But for how many of us will this be what our life looks like in the eyes of the Lord? But how do we know if this is true of our life or not? Part of that answer comes from looking at a life like Amaziah's and examining it to see if our life looks like his. Clearly he was a wholly half-hearted man. So, what does a wholly half-hearted devotion to God look like?

I. It is Partially Obedient – 25:2-4

- a. Well, right away we see that this wholly half-hearted devotion is partially obedient. Let's read verses 2-4. Amaziah was at least partially obedient at the outset of his reign. He dealt with the assassins who had killed the previous king, and the text explicitly tells us that he did not kill the children of the assassins because he obeyed the Word of the Lord as it is found in the Law. Isn't it amazing that this is right after the statement about Amaziah's life? He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart. And then whammo – here is our first example. Here is what it looks like to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart. Obviously it is possible to do the right thing with a heart that is not wholly committed. Obviously it was possible for Amaziah to follow the Law in its minutest directive about who should suffer the penalty of a capital punishment type of sin, and yet to do so with a heart that was not wholly devoted to the Lord. So, what was it that compelled Amaziah to do this? If he is not fully committed to the Lord, why would he lead the way in following the Law to its finest detail at the outset of his reign? What would compel him to this? Well, the text doesn't explicitly say, but just think through Amaziah's life for a minute and surmise as to why he would obey the Law, yet not with a whole heart.
 1. Maybe Amaziah was simply doing what he knew. So maybe he was half-hearted in that he was simply obeying the Law of the Lord because that was what he knew to do. His obedience wasn't sourced in a heart that was full of a right fear of the Lord and it didn't spill over from a heart of worship, but rather he obeyed with a heart that was not wholly true. Maybe this was because obedience to the Law in this area was what he knew. We know this in our own lives. We know obedience to God that is sourced in a half-hearted commitment that is driven more by what we know than by who we are seeking to worship.
 2. Another possibility is that Amaziah was doing what was right because at this point in his life it was what was working. Maybe he was half-hearted in that he was a simple

pragmatist. He obeyed the Law because at that point it worked, but later on he would try something else and be convinced that in some way it worked better.

3. Or maybe Amaziah was wholly half-hearted in that he was doing this for the approval of men. You see the power had been recently established in his hand and he needed to prove to all the Yahweh loyalists that indeed he was going to be a king that they could trust. In fact, he was going to be so loyal to Yahweh that he was going to bring the previous assassins to justice, but he was not going to follow the custom of the royal purge and kill the whole family, but rather he was going to obey the Law because he wanted to impress others with his obedience. You see half-hearted devotion can look like full obedience, but if it is sourced in a motive that is something like this, then it is simply half-hearted obedience.
- b. So, to say that someone did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart means at least in part that they were partially obedient. This should give us great pause as those who seek to follow Christ. How easy it is for us to be motivated in our obedience by things that are anything but whole-hearted love for the Lord! How easy it is to be like Amaziah – one who does what is right, yet not with a whole heart. Did not Jesus make clear that this was not enough? Did he not call us to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Was this not a reiteration of what the Law itself said? You see, what was expected of worshipers of Yahweh in the Old Testament is still expected of worshipers of God in this age of grace. Though our relationship is secure through grace by faith, we are not to abuse grace by abounding in half-hearted devotion. Rather, we must seek to be like David not Amaziah. And we know the difference between the two by seeing that Amaziah was a man who was partially obedient.

II. It is Initially Dependent – 25:5-13

- a. Also, we can see from Amaziah's life that he was initially dependent. So, this life that is wholly half-hearted for the Lord is a life that is initially dependent. We see this in verses 5-13. *Read verses 5-13.*
- b. Early on in his reign over God's people he desires to re-establish the nation as a power to be dealt with and he desires to re-conquer some of the land that was lost under other kings, and so he organizes the army and takes count to see what kind of a force he has. Realizing that in human estimation he needs more troops to wage any kind of a winning effort in battle he hires mercenaries from Israel to come and fight with them. This leads to God sending an unnamed prophet to Amaziah to point him to two realities. First of all, you shouldn't have hired people from the idolatrous nation of Israel because the Lord is not with them and if he is not with them and you go into battle with them they will be of no help to you, so send them home. And second of all, you should depend fully upon the Lord who alone has the ability to help or to cast down. In other words, O Amaziah, don't put your trust in the idolatrous men from Israel, but put your trust singularly in Yahweh God to help.
- c. Amaziah's initial response is a telling foreshadow of things to come as he frets over the 100 talents of silver that he had already given to these mercenary soldiers. But when he is re-assured by the prophet that the Lord can give him much more than this 100 talents of silver, presumably in the bounty from the impending war, then Amaziah is much more willing to cast his lot with the Lord and depend upon him for the victory. Obviously this wholly half-hearted devotion to the Lord can have moments of trust in the Lord. So, don't be fooled in your own life by moments of trust, for these are even evident in the lives of wholly half-hearted worshipers of God! This

initial dependence upon God quickly gives way to irrational idolatry in the life of Amaziah which gives us another clue as to what this wholly half-hearted life looks like.

III. It is Irrationally Idolatrous – 25:14-15

- a. It is a life that is irrationally idolatrous. After Amaziah's astounding and complete obliteration of the men of Edom we read this about him in verses 14-15. *Read vs. 14-15.*
- b. Even though we know the wickedness of the heart of man, we are still appalled when we see it in black and white on the pages of Scripture, and in the true color of real life. How could Amaziah do this? How in the world can you be on the winning side of a gigantic victory and then come home and worship the idols of the people you just destroyed? How is it that Amaziah could be promised victory by the prophet of Yahweh God and go out into battle depending upon this Yahweh God who alone can help or cast down, and then after the victory is given by Yahweh God, return with the stone and wood idols of the Edomites and worship them and make offerings to them? The answer is quite obvious. He was a wholly half-hearted worshiper of Yahweh God. This is what it looks like to be wholly half-hearted.
- c. It looks like initial dependence mixed with irrational idolatry. It looks like pure worship of Yahweh God one day and then blatant and irrational worship of a false god on another day. And how does God think about this? Well, he is angry and he sends his Word to clearly speak against it. He knows the makeup of mankind and he willingly sends his authoritative word to correct and instruct the sinful heart. God's typical response to the sins of mankind, even the most blatant and irrational ones like this, is to speak His authoritative Word. It is really at this point in man's interaction with God that one sees the true color of his devotion to the Lord. You will remember that David is the righteous standard bearer by which all other kings are compared, and David sinned grievously and irrationally against the Lord as well. He didn't worship the false gods of another land, but he worshiped the gods of lust, greed, and deceitful cover up. And yet, he is called a man after God's own heart. There is no appendage to that statement like there is here with Amaziah. He is not a man after God's own heart, yet . . . No, he was a man after God's own heart. But the big "yet" in our minds is that he sinned grievously. But amazingly it is not the one-time blatant and scandalous sin that determines whether or not you have a wholly true heart. Rather it is your response to the authoritative Word of God that is sent in response to your egregious sin.

IV. It is Arrogantly Obstinate – 25:16

- a. And what is Amaziah's response? Well, he is arrogantly obstinate. So much so that in verse 16 he cuts off the message of the prophet and tells him to just stop because they haven't asked for his counsel and if he continues he will wind up getting himself killed. This is the epitome of arrogant obstinacy. He completely disregards the authoritative word of God through the mouth of his prophet and literally tells him to stop talking. This is what a wholly half-hearted devotion to God looks like. It is a heart that is hardened by sin and finds itself very willing to obstinately reject the authoritative Word of the Lord. This seems rather appalling until you consider that the birth of sin in the human heart has this same disregard for the Word. So, Amaziah disregarded the first and second commandments that he obviously knew very well. He had irrational and arrogant obstinacy that led to idolatrous actions that prepared him for another dose of arrogant obstinacy when he was again confronted with the authoritative Word of God. This arrogant obstinacy that is found at the birth of sin in our hearts provides fertile soil for idolatry and for further arrogant obstinacy to the Word of the Lord as it confronts our sinful heart.

- b. And this is characteristic of the wholly half-hearted devotion. A man or woman who does what is right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart will find themselves in a situation like Amaziah where they are arrogantly obstinate toward the authoritative word of the Lord. And this obstinate stance will be there at the birth of sin and when the sin is confronted by the Word of the Lord. Contrast this with David and you see a stark difference between a heart that is wholly true and one that is not. What was David's response to the authoritative word of the Lord as it fell from the mouth of Nathan the prophet? "I have sinned." Instant contrition and brokenness rather than ongoing arrogance and obstinacy. What a difference from the wholly half-hearted king Amaziah! You see, your devotion to the Lord is not singularly determined by whether or not you sin, because the Lord knows that we all will. But rather the true color of your devotion will be shown in your response to the authoritative Word of the Lord as it confronts you in the aftermath of your sinful choice. A wholly half-hearted devotion will regularly spurn the Word of the Lord and continue on in sin. But the heart that is seeking to be like God's heart will be a heart that is broken by the condemning words of Scripture as they point out the error of your ways.
- c. Notice also that Amaziah's response to the prophet is basically that he will not listen to God's counsel because it is coming from a prophet who hasn't been recognized as a royal counselor. In other words, since you don't have authority that is recognized by me then I will not listen to you. But then notice the prophet's response to this. He stops saying what he was saying and simply says that he knows that God has determined to destroy Amaziah because Amaziah has refused to listen to the counsel of the prophet. The Hebrew word for "has determined" is the verb form of the word for "counsel." So, there is a play on words here for effect. Because Amaziah has refused God's counsel, God has made the determination through consulting his own wise counsel that Amaziah will be destroyed! And as we will see here in a minute – that is exactly what happens. So it really doesn't matter if Amaziah thought that God's counsel was authoritative or not – it was authoritative because it is God's counsel that determines the course of human history. And Amaziah's refusal to heed the Word of the Lord set God's counsel in the direction of destroying this king! So, no matter whose counsel you think to be authoritative when it comes to assessing your life, there is only one counsel that is truly authoritative – whether you recognize it to be so or not. The wholly half-hearted will continue on regardless of God's counsel, but the man or woman after God's heart will be broken and shaped and directed by God's authoritative Word.

V. It is Foolishly Self-Sufficient – 25:17-20

- a. We also see in Amaziah that the wholly half-hearted life is one that is foolishly self-sufficient. You would think we could stop with arrogant obstinacy, but oh no – it gets better – or worse I guess we should say. Look at verse 17. *Read 17-20.* What is Amaziah's response to God's powerful working to give him the victory over Edom? Well, first he takes the gods of Edom and worships them rather than the one true God. And then he refuses God's counsel because it isn't what he wants to hear about his idolatry. And then he takes counsel – presumably with his own recognized authoritative royal counselors – and decides to challenge the ten northern tribes to a battle. So, he sends word to the king of Israel to come and look him in the face, which is a euphemism for come and draw up battle lines. Joash of Israel responds with an allegory in which he pegs Amaziah's problem – he is puffed up and boastful. He is prideful and self-sufficient. This prideful self-sufficiency has propelled him to foolishly think that he can defeat Israel.

- b. But Joash's words have no effect upon Amaziah, and we are told why in verse 20. Because the Lord had determined that they were going to lose to Israel in battle because they had sought out the foreign gods of the Edomites. In other words, when Amaziah refused to heed God's Word back in verse 16, now here in verse 20 the Lord is at work to give Amaziah what he has chosen – sure destruction. But before we get to the detail of the destruction don't miss the lesson that is here about the wholly half-hearted.
- c. The victory that God gave to Amaziah over Edom should have been a source of deep humility and true worship from Amaziah's heart. But instead of seeing the Lord in the battle, he saw his own strength and was puffed up to vile self-sufficiency. This is what our sinful hearts are prone to. We are prone to see things in our life and assume that we have been solely responsible. We tend to look at the victories and the strengths of life and think that they can be attributed to us, when in reality they should be sources of humble worship for what God has done. The wholly half-hearted have as a trademark foolish self-sufficiency rather than humble dependence.

VI. It is Overwhelmingly Awful – 25:18-28

- a. And the result of all of these things is found in verses 18-28 and it is overwhelmingly awful. So the wholly half-hearted king Amaziah was a man who had partial obedience, and initial dependence that gave way to irrational idolatry and arrogant obstinacy which fed his foolish self-sufficiency. And the result of all of this was overwhelmingly awful. Judah was obliterated by Israel in battle. Amaziah was captured and presumably taken as a hostage. Six hundred feet of the most indefensible section of the wall of Jerusalem was torn down by Joash and his army. Gold, silver, and vessels were taken from the Temple. The Treasury of the king was seized. Hostages were taken. And Amaziah was eventually killed by conspirators within his own ranks.
- b. Let this be a billboard of warning to you about the life of the wholly half-hearted. See verses 18-28 in bright orange with flashing lights in the margins! You do not want the disastrous end of a life that is wholly half-hearted! Now admittedly you will most likely not experience the drastic consequences in your life that Amaziah did because you are not king over God's chosen people, but don't let that fool you into thinking that your half-hearted devotion is somehow less dangerous or less costly. Half-hearted love for the Lord is always overwhelmingly awful. While it may not cost you physical possession or even your physical life, it will still cost you much. Therefore, our desire this morning should be to root out this half-hearted devotion in our life. We should want to find it and expunge it for the sake of the glory of God.

Conclusion: So, where do you see partial obedience and initial dependence followed by irrational idolatry and arrogant obstinacy? Are there traces of foolish self-sufficiency where you are prone to see the powerful hand of God at work in your life and presume upon that power as though somehow it is your own? These are not germane and harmless. These are life-altering heart conditions that must be rooted out and dealt with by the gracious work of God in your life. As the authoritative Word of God has shown these to you this morning how will you respond? Will you be like Amaziah who cares little for God's opinion in the matter, or will you be like David and out of a broken heart say – "I have sinned." You see David's sin still brought lifelong consequence, but his response to God's Word wrote his obituary. Instead of being the man who ruined the kingdom through adultery and murder, he was the man who had a heart that was patterned after God's own heart. Amaziah on the other hand wrote his own obituary too when he refused to heed the Word of God as it confronted his irrational idolatry. Which one is most like your heart this morning?

As you think through and answer that question can I point you to the great hope that is found in Jesus Christ? You see, Yahweh's standard for his kings was that they be like David, but instead Amaziah chose to be like Joash his father. But there was coming another descendant of David who would far surpass even David's whole

hearted devotion. Jesus of Nazareth came and lived sinlessly and so instead of destroying the nation and the kingdom, He established it through his sacrificial death on the Cross. Instead of the walls being broken down and the Temple being looted, the foundation stone of the eternal Kingdom was set and a way for entrance into that Kingdom was established through the shed blood of this perfect King. He who lived sinlessly died substitutionally so that those who have sinned could be forgiven and washed clean and enter into His eternal Kingdom. So, don't just see in Amaziah another depressing example of the sinful heart of man, but rather see in Amaziah man's desperate need for a Savior, and rejoice because that Savior has come! Let's pray.

Commissioning of Briana Busenitz to the Gospel Ministry:

- Introductory Comments – Pastor Matt
 - We have prayed often for the Lord to raise up from among us workers for the harvest, and in Briana we see a partial answer to that prayer, and for this we rejoice!
 - Briana is going out under the umbrella of SIM and her plan as of now is to work in South Sudan with a medical team who is using medical care as a way to bridge the gap to point people to their true spiritual needs.
 - Those of you who know Briana know of her zealous heart for the lost and of her desire to use her life to its fullest potential for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What we have before us today is the next step in Briana being sent from us to use her life to the fullest for the sake of the glory of Christ. What a wonderful opportunity is before us to place our hand of approval and partnership upon our dear sister.
- Comments from Briana
- Musical Exhortation – Lydia Carroll
- Reading of Poem written by Milton & Tonia Busenitz
- Explanation of our Commissioning of Briana Busenitz
 - This is a commissioning and not an ordination. In other words we are officially and publicly sending Briana to the task of Gospel ministry in another place. Ordination would be the congregational stamp of approval upon a man who is seeking the pastoral ministry. Briana is obviously not going into pastoral or preaching ministry, but she is definitely going to Africa to do Gospel ministry. And it is to this that we are sending her. We do want her to make a positive influence on the health of those she comes in contact with, but we know that God has more for her to do than simply help others physically. We know that she will and we commission Briana to use her medical skills as means to impact women with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. She is going for the sake of proclaiming Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, buried, and risen again. And so today, we officially charge her with this task and send her to do this.
 - In just a moment the leadership of our church body, the elders, will come and will lay hands upon Briana and pray for her. There is no official transfer of grace in this act, and we as the leaders of this church are not somehow endued with more spiritual power that we now pass on to her. But rather there is great symbol in what we do. As the leaders of the church we represent the church as a whole. Because not everyone can gather around Briana and pray over her, it is appropriate that our leaders do as representatives of the whole. As we lay our hands upon Briana we are identifying with her decision to go out from us and be used by God in Africa. We are saying through symbol that we agree with this decision and we commend this decision. We are not only identifying and commending, but we are also partnering. By laying our hands upon her we are making clear to her that this mission that she is about to embark on is our mission as

well. While we cannot go with her we will partner with her in praying for her and giving to financial needs, and seeking to encourage her faithful perseverance throughout her time in ministry there.

- I would ask that Briana and the elders make their way to the front. As they do so, I will mention to you that we have tried to plan out how we should pray for Briana during this time, and so we will have 4 of our elders pray for different categories for Briana. Doug Unruh will start and Larry Harms will finish.
- Read Ephesians 6:10-20.
- Laying on of Hands
 - Prayer of Praise for God's Work in propelling, equipping, and sending Briana – Doug Unruh
 - Prayer for Safety for God's Servant as she goes to the front lines of the battle (both spiritual and physical safety) – Bob Clark
 - Prayer for wisdom, growth, unity on the team, and direction for ministry once she arrives on the Field – Ken Regier
 - Prayer for the advance of the Gospel through Briana's life and work and that more would be sent from among us to the harvest fields of the world – Larry Harms
- Congregational Song – *Benediction*