

CHAPTER 25

Amaziah's reign, recorded in this chapter, was not one of the worse and yet for from good. Most of the passages in this chapter we had before more briefly related, 2 Kings 14. Here we find Amaziah,

- I.** A just revenger of his father's death (v. 1-4).
- II.** An obedient observer of the command of God (v. 5-10).
- III.** A cruel conqueror of the Edomites (v. 11-13).
- IV.** a foolish worshipper of the gods of Edom and impatient of reproof for it (v. 14-16).
- V.** Rashly challenging the king of Israel, and smarting for his rashness (v. 17-24). And, lastly, ending his days ingloriously (v. 25-28).

<1420> 2 CHRONICLES 25:1-13

AMAZIAH'S REIGN AND VICTORIES

Here is,

I. The general character of Amaziah: *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*, worshipped the true God, kept the temple service a going, and countenanced religion in his kingdom; but he did not do it *with a perfect heart* (v. 2), that is, he was not a man of serious piety or devotion himself, nor had he any zeal for the exercises of religion. He was no enemy to it, but a cool and indifferent friend. Such is the character of too many in this Laodicean age: they do that which is good, but not with the heart, not with a perfect heart.

II. A necessary piece of justice which he did upon the traitors that murdered his father: he put them to death, v. 3. Though we should suppose they intended to avenge on their king the death of the prophet (as was intimated, <1425> 2 Chronicles 24:25), yet this would by no means justify their wickedness; for *they* were not the avengers, but presumptuously took

God's work out of his hands: and therefore Amaziah did what became him in calling them to an account for it, but forbade the putting of the children to death for the parents' sin, v. 4.

III. An expedition of his against the Edomites, who, some time ago, had revolted from under the dominion of Judah, to which he attempted to reduce them. Observe,

1. The great preparation he made for this expedition.

(1.) He mustered his own forces, and marshalled them (v. 5), and found Judah and Benjamin in all but 300,000 men that were fit for war, whereas, in Jehoshaphat's time, fifty or sixty years before, they were four times as many. Sin weakens a people, diminishes them, dispirits them, and lessens their number and figure.

(2.) He hired auxiliary troops out of the kingdom of Israel, v. 6. Finding his own kingdom defective in men, he thought to make up the deficiency with his money, and therefore took into his pay 100,000 Israelites. If he had advised with any of his prophets before he did this, or had but considered how little any of his ancestors got by their alliances with Israel, he would not have had this to undo again. But rashness makes work for repentance.

2. The command which God sent him by a prophet to dismiss out of his service the forces of Israel, v. 7, 8. He would not have him call in any assistance at all: it looked like distrust of God. If he made sure of God's presence, the army he had of his own was sufficient. But particularly he must not take in *their* assistance: *For the Lord is not with the children of Ephraim, because they are not with him*, but worship the calves. This was a good reason why he should not make use of them, because he could not depend upon them to do him any service. What good could be expected from those that had not God with them, nor his blessings upon their undertakings? It is comfortable to employ those who, we have reason to hope, have an interest in heaven, and dangerous to associate with those from whom the Lord has departed. The prophet assured him that if he persisted in his resolution to take these idolatrous apostate Israelites with him, in hopes thereby to make himself strong for the battle, it was at his peril; they would prove a dead weight to his army, would sink and betray it: "*God shall make thee fall before the enemy, and these Israelites will be the ruin of thy cause; for God has power to help thee without them, and to cast thee down though thou hast them with thee.*"

3. The objection which Amaziah made against this command, and the satisfactory answer which the prophet gave to that objection, v. 9. The king had remitted 100 talents to the men of Israel for advance-money. “Now,” says he, “if I send them back, I shall lose that: *But what shall we do for the 100 talents?*” This is an objection men often make against their duty: they are afraid of losing by it. “Regard not that,” says the prophet: “*The Lord is able to give thee much more than this;* and, thou mayest depend upon it, he will not see thee lose by him. What are 100 talents between thee and him? He has ways enough to make up the loss to thee; it is below thee to speak of it.” Note, A firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to bear us out in our duty, and to make up all the loss and damage we sustain in his service abundantly to our advantage, will make his yoke very easy and his burden very light. What is it to trust in God, but to be willing to venture the loss of any thing for him, in confidence of the goodness of the security he gives us that we shall not lose by him, but that whatever we part with for his sake shall be made up to us in kind or kindness. When we grudge to part with any thing for God and our religion, this should satisfy us, that God is able to give us much more than this. He is just, and he is good, and he is solvent. The king lost 100 talents by his obedience; and we find just that sum given to his grandson Jotham as a present (^{<4275>}2 Chronicles 27:5); then the principal was repaid, and, for interest, 10,000 measures of wheat and as many of barley.

4. His obedience to the command of God, which is upon record to his honour. He would rather lose his money, disoblige his allies, and dismiss a fourth part of his army just as they were going to take the field, than offend God: *He separated the army of Ephraim, to go home again*, v. 10. And they went home in great anger, taking it as a great affront thus to be made fools of, and to be cashiered as men not fit to be employed, and being perhaps disappointed of the advantages they promised themselves in spoil and plunder by joining with Judah against Edom. Men are apt to resent that which touches them in their profit or reputation, though it frees them from trouble.

5. His triumphs over the Edomites, v. 11, 12. He left dead upon the spot, in the field of battle, 10,000 men; 10,000 more he took prisoners, and barbarously killed them all by throwing them down some steep and craggy precipice. What provocation he had to exercise this cruelty towards them we are not told; but it was certainly very severe.

6. The mischief which the disbanded soldiers of Israel did to the cities of Judah, either in their return or soon after, v. 13. They were so enraged at being sent home that, if they might not go to share with Judah in the spoil of Edom, they would make a prey of Judah. Several cities that lay upon the borders they plundered, killing 3000 men that made resistance. But why should God suffer this to be done? Was it not in obedience to him that they were sent home, and yet shall the country thus suffer by it? Surely God's way is in the sea! Did not the prophet say that God was not with the children of Ephraim, and yet they are suffered to prevail against Judah? Doubtless God intended hereby to chastise those cities of Judah for their idolatries, which were found most in those parts that lay next to Israel. The men of Israel had corrupted them, and now they were made a plague to them. Satan both tempts and torments.

~~4254~~ 2 CHRONICLES 25:14-16

AMAZIAH'S IDOLATRY

Here is,

I. The revolt of Amaziah from the God of Israel to the gods of the Edomites. Egregious folly! Ahaz worshipped the gods of those that had conquered him, for which he had some little colour, ~~4233~~ 2 Chronicles 28:23. But to worship the gods of those whom he had conquered, who could not protect their own worshippers, was the greatest absurdity that could be. What did he see in the gods of the children of Seir that could tempt him to set them up for *his gods* and *bow himself down before them?* v. 14. If he had cast the idols down from the rock and broken them to pieces, instead of the prisoners, he would have manifested more of the piety as well as more of the pity of an Israelite; but perhaps for that barbarous inhumanity he was given up to this ridiculous idolatry.

II. The reproof which God sent to him, by a prophet, for this sin. *The anger of the Lord was kindled against him*, and justly; yet, before he sent to destroy him, he sent to convince and reclaim him, and so to prevent his destruction. The prophet reasoned with him very fairly and very mildly: *Why hast thou sought the favour of those gods which could not deliver their own people?* v. 15. If men would but duly consider the inability of all

those things to help them to which they have recourse when they forsake God, they would not be such enemies to themselves.

III. The check he gave to the reprovcr, v. 16. He could say nothing in excuse of his own folly; the reproof was too just to be answered. But he fell into a passion with the reprovcr.

1. He taunted him as saucy and impertinent, and meddling with that which did not belong to him: *Art thou made of the king's counsel?* Could not a man speak reasonably to him, but he must be upbraided as usurping the place of a privy-counsellor? But, as a prophet, he really was made of the king's counsel by the King of kings, in duty to whom the king was bound not only to hear, but to ask and take his counsel.

2. He silenced him, bade him forbear and say not a word more to him. He *said to the seer, See not,* ^{<300>}Isaiah 30:10. Men would gladly have their prophets thus under their girdles, as we say, to speak just when and what they would have them speak, and not otherwise.

3. He threatened him: "*Why shouldst thou be smitten?*" It is at thy peril if thou sayest a word more of this matter." He seems to remind him of Zechariah's fate in the last reign, who was put to death for making bold with the king; and bids him take warning by him. Thus he justifies the killing of that prophet by menacing this, and so, in effect, makes himself guilty of the blood of both. He had hearkened to the prophet who ordered him to send back the army of Israel, and was ruled by him, though he contradicted his politics and lost him 100 talents, v. 10. But this prophet, who dissuaded him from worshipping the gods of the Edomites, he ran upon with an unaccountable rage, which must be attributed to the witchcraft of idolatry. He was easily persuaded to part with his talents of silver, but by no means with his gods of silver.

IV. The doom which the prophet passed upon him for this. He had more to say to him by way of instruction and advice; but, finding him obstinate in his iniquity, he forbore. He is *joined to idols; let him alone,* ^{<3017>}Hosea 4:17. Miserable is the condition of that man with whom the blessed Spirit, by ministers and conscience, *forbears to strive,* ^{<008>}Genesis 6:3. And both the reprovers in the gate and that in the bosom, if long brow-beaten and baffled, will at length forbear. So I *gave them up to their own hearts' lusts.* The secure sinner perhaps values himself upon it as a noble and happy achievement to have silenced his reprovers and monitors, and to get clear

of them; but what comes of it? “*I know that God has determined to destroy thee; it is a plain indication that thou art marked for ruin that thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel.*” Those that are deaf to reproof are ripening apace for destruction, ^{<191>}Proverbs 29:1.

^{<457>}2 CHRONICLES 25:17-28

THE DEATH OF AMAZIAH

We have here this degenerate prince mortified by his neighbour and murdered by his own subjects.

I. Never was proud prince more thoroughly mortified than Amaziah was by Joash king of Israel.

1. This part of the story (which was as fully related ^{<148>}2 Kings 14:8, etc., as it is here) — embracing the foolish challenge which Amaziah sent to Joash (v. 17), his haughty scornful answer to it (v. 18), with the friendly advice he gave him to sit still and know when he was well off, (v. 19), — his wilfully persisting in his challenge (v. 20, 21), the defeat that was given him (v. 22), and the calamity he brought upon himself and his city thereby (v. 23, 24), — verifies two of Solomon's proverbs: —

(1.) That *a man's pride will bring him low*, ^{<123>}Proverbs 29:23. It goes before his destruction; not only procures it meritoriously, but is often the immediate occasion of it. *He that exalteth himself shall be abased.*

(2.) That he that *goes forth hastily to strive* will probably not know what to do in the end thereof, *when his neighbour has put him to shame*, ^{<108>}Proverbs 25:8. He that is fond of contention may have enough of it sooner than he thinks of.

2. But there are two passages in this story which we had not before in the *Kings*.

(1.) That *Amaziah took advice* before he challenged the king of Israel, v. 17. But of whom? Not of the prophet — he was *not made of the king's counsel*; but of his statesmen that would flatter him and bid him go up and prosper. It is good to take advice, but then it must be of those that are fit to advise us. Those that will not take advice from the word of God, which

would guide them aright, will justly be left to the bad advice of those that will counsel them to their destruction. Let those be made fools that will not be made wise.

(2.) Amaziah's imprudence is here made the punishment of his impiety (v. 20): *It was of the Lord*; he left him to himself to act thus foolishly, that he and his people might be *delivered into the hands of their enemies, because they had forsaken God and sought after the gods of Edom*. Those that will not be persuaded to do well for their souls will justly be given up to their own counsels to do ill for themselves even in their outward affairs.

II. Never was poor prince more violently pursued by his own subjects. *From the time* that he departed from the Lord (so it may be read, v. 27) the hearts of his subjects departed from him, and they began to form a design against him in Jerusalem. It is probable they were exasperated against him more for his rashly engaging in a war against Israel than for his worshipping the gods of Edom. But at length the ferment grew so high, and he perceived the plot to be laid so deeply, that he thought fit to quit his royal city and flee to Lachish, either as a private place where he might be hid or as a strong place where he might be guarded; but they sent after him thither, and slew him there. By this the putting of him to death seems to have been done deliberately, and to have been the act, not of a disgusted servant or two, but of a considerable body that durst avow it. How unrighteous soever they were herein, God was righteous.