

UZZIAH ... and a family in decline  
UZZIAH ... and a family in decline

(2 CHRONICLES 26: 3-21)

This is the story of a quarrel in a church ; it is the account of a man who did not get his own way in the conduct of the sanctuary. Such men often affirm that it is possible to be a devout worshipper without attending any church ; but their statements are misleading. From time immemorial man has been his brother's keeper, and no one can persistently refrain from worshipping in the sanctuary without displeasing God and providing a bad example for other people.

#### The Father who Quarrelled in Church

" Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem..... He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord..... He was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense. . . ." This was an act of great folly, and it was not a cause for amazement when the priest followed to challenge him before the altar. The king frowned. What right had any priest to interfere with royal prerogatives? It was impertinence of the most blatant order. The meddlesome cleric should be taught a lesson.... "And while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord ... and, behold, he was leprous . . . and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him." Arrogance is always out of place before the altar of God ; and anyone who would belligerently argue with the Almighty is to some degree committing Suicide. " And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house . . . and Jotham his son was over the king's house."

#### The Son who Stayed Away from Church

"And Jotham his son reigned in his stead..... and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord..... howbeit he entered not into the temple of the Lord " (2 Chron. 26: 23 ; 27: 1, 2). Here we find a strange contrast. His grandfather, Zadok, had been a great priest (cf. 27: 1), and his father also had been a believer until arrogance ruined his testimony. The new king could not conquer the bitterness of his spirit. He believed in the principles of religion ; he was quite prepared to admit that they represented the greatest features in the life of the nation ; but resentment lingered in his soul. His father had been punished in that temple, and his tears of repentance had been unavailing. Jotham had no wish to attend the services. He could be as good a man staying at home. King Jotham bequeathed to posterity statements that will last to the end of time. Alas, other people have quarrelled within the churches, and have followed the ancient example. They send their children to Sunday-schools, they sometimes send their offerings to maintain the church ministry ; yet bitterness of heart provides a constant source of prejudice. They do not realize that the stupidity of their actions determines the attitude of their children.

#### The Grandson who Closed the Church

" And Jotham slept with his fathers . . . and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead . . . .He did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord ... he made molten images for Baalim....

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And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God,  
and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up  
the doors of the house of the Lord - . ." (2 Chron. 27: 9 ;  
28: 1, 2, 24). And if great-grandfather Zadok had been able  
to witness this foul deed, his benign old face would have been  
wet with tears. It was almost inconceivable that within the  
span of four generations the family of a priest could so de-  
generate. The sacred house was somber and silent ; the huge  
doors were fastened, and would-be worshippers were driven  
away. Laughing people saw the substitute altars at the street  
corners, and the cause of God was ridiculed. Such was the  
result of the evil example given by a man who refrained from  
entering the house of God. Christians do well to remember  
the command, " Forsake not the assembling of yourselves  
together." The Church of Christ is the representative body  
of the Lord in this world. It is the divine will that all who  
claim allegiance to Christ should play a part in its sacred  
service. No man can be well-pleasing to his Lord if he  
persistently ignores God's wishes in regard to this important  
matter. In spite of the presence of hypocrites in the syna-  
gogues, Christ always attended the services. All true Christians  
will delight in following His example.

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