

St. Matthew A.M.E. Church
Bible Study
Monday, January 7, 2008

Landmines Part I

Satan will do anything to prevent us from becoming the person God has planned for us to be. His strategy is to entice us to sin and drift in our devotion to God. He does this by many of the things we feel are harmless or unavoidable sins- gossip, feelings of unforgiveness, pride and cynicism to name a few. This tactic is called lay landmines. Landmines are one of the most devastating weapons used in warfare today. They lay hidden beneath the surface barely visible. But when we move in their direction, they explode beneath us, inflicting deep heartache, sorrow and brokenness.

By the time a landmine is uncovered, it is usually too late to get out of the way. Its stealthy appearance is sinister and deadly. Satan strategically places landmines in the path of every believer. There is no such thing as a clear, straight path without landmines. Every day we face the threat of stepping on a spiritual landmine and suffering the sorrow and devastation this brings.

Landmine of Pride

Of all the landmines the enemy lays the one that causes the greatest devastation is the landmine of pride. Many of our problems result from pride's work in our lives. We become prideful over the good things that God has given us-jobs, families, children, churches, pastors, education, neighborhoods, and much more. God is very specific. He hates pride. In fact it is at the top of His list of sins that He despises. (Proverbs 8:13)

Each morning, the enemy lays out his landmines in our lives. The landmark of pride can tear a gaping hole in the life of the person who yields to its folly. It is one of Satan's chief modes of operation and favorite weapons of warfare. We may ask isn't it right to have pride in ourselves and our abilities, especially if God has given us our abilities and blessed us? There is nothing wrong with having a sense of pride in doing things well. God gives us talents and abilities to use for His glory, and He wants us to do our best. When we do, we honor Him and His life within us. However, many people fail to honor the Lord with their attitudes. They believe Satan's lies, which tell them they can accomplish whatever they want apart from God.

Many times, people are unable to handle the wealth, position, blessing, skill, or talent that God gives them. King Uzziah is a perfect example. When he was sixteen, he became King of Judah and reigned for 52 years in Jerusalem. During that time he "did right in the sight of the Lord." (2 Chronicles 26:4-5) Yet a dangerous "however" was built into his life. It was a landmine that lay hidden for years. When the king drew near it exploded. A portion of verse 5 says, "as long as the king sought the Lord, God prospered him." (2 Chronicles 26:12, 13,15)

Believing all the good things people say about you will lead you to become prideful. Pride always precedes a fall, whereas humility goes a long way toward success. As Uzziah grew in popularity and strength, he began to think that he did not need God. The drift in his devotion to the Lord was subtle-almost undetectable-until one day it broke out in open rebellion. The author of Proverbs has reminded us, "when pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the mumble is wisdom." (Proverbs 11:2) If we are not careful and discerning, the same attitude that prevailed in Uzziah's life will prevail in our lives too. When King Uzziah realized the strength and ability God had given him, he became proud and no longer relied on the wisdom of the Lord to guide him: "he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the

Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. (2 Chronicles 26:16) Offering a sacrifice to God was one of the worst acts Uzziah could have committed. It is the same action that led to King Saul's demise (1 Samuel 13:8-14) In both cases, these men did something that God had anointed the priest to do and no one else. In pride they assumed that no action was beyond their limits.

Priest were the only ones who could burn incense on the altar but blinded by pride the king jumped ahead of God in doing something that was not his to do.

Falling Victim to Pride

In Proverbs 29:23, Solomon wrote, "a man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor." There is an end result to pride- one that we usually want to ignore. (Proverbs 16:18-19) Instead of praying and asking God to give us His wisdom for our circumstances, we move forward, believing we know what is best.

When King Uzziah was young, he openly admitted his need for help- especially God's help. He listened to the priest and heeded godly advice. However, when he was older, he began to think he had wisdom and did not need anyone other than himself. We fall victim to pride for several reasons:

- *self-centeredness
- *feelings of inadequacy
- *immaturity and an inability to handle responsibility
- *inability to handle wealth, position, and the gifts God has given

Pride is an evil, dark snare. It shows no mercy and rarely, if ever, announces its coming. It is sinister and slides into our lives by whispering thoughts of arrogance, conceit, and self importance.

Azariah the priest entered the temple, saw what Uzziah was about to do, and opposed him, saying, "it is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priest, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the Lord God." (2 Chronicles 26:18) Even after hearing this rebuke, the king remained unrepentant and headstrong and did what he wanted only to suffer the consequences. (2 Chronicles 26:19) Uzziah when he realized what he had done fled the house of the Lord, the same thing Adam and Eve did after sinning against God.

As far as we know, Uzziah never turned back to the Lord in humility. He spent the rest of his life living as a leper in a separate house, cut off from God's presence and his goodness. (2 Chronicles 26:21) What a sorrowful fate for someone who had such a promising beginning- a man who had spent most of his life living in devotion to God. The account of King Uzziah's life should be a strong warning to us.

Specific signs tell us we are struggling with pride. Some of the signs are:

- *arrogance *self-promotion *lack of giving to God and others
- *a selfish attitude *refusal to listen to the advice of others *lack of submission to those in authority
- *a spirit of rebellion *bragging lack of humble regard for God and others
- *the inability to receive a compliment

We need God's wisdom and most of all, His loving care. We need to know that we are loved just because God is a God of love and He cares for us, no matter what status we hold. Pride often surfaces because a person feels inferior and thinks they need to be more than what they are. Don't fall for Satan's tactics. Through Jesus Christ we are able to become all that God desires us to be.

