

Allan was very active in British political and social reform in the middle of the 19th century. Some would say too active. As a young man, Allan was enthusiastic for his cause to a fault. During one vociferous demonstration, violence erupted. A police sergeant was hurt – not seriously, but wounded nevertheless. Allan was fingered as one of the key leaders of the demonstration who would be responsible. So a warrant was issued for Allan's arrest. Allan was now a wanted man, on the lam.

After several weeks of hiding out from the police, Allan knew that he didn't want to live the rest of his life like this. But he didn't want to go to jail for something that he felt was unwarranted either. He needed a new start in life. So Allan convinced his fiancé to immigrate to North America with him. They were married shortly and a couple of weeks later, Allan and his new wife were smuggled on board a ship destined for our continent.

After a stormy passage, their ship struck a large rock off the coast of Nova Scotia and sunk. Allan and his wife were able to make it to shore in a lifeboat. From there, they journeyed to Montreal where Allan got a temporary job. Allan was a barrel-maker by trade and he didn't have much trouble finding some work. But Allan's dream was to get to our country and set up a shop of his own. So after he had saved enough money to make another trip, Allan and his wife journeyed to the Midwest. They had enough money to get to Dundee, Illinois – so they settled down there and Allan opened a barrel-making shop.

A couple of years passed and Allan was doing pretty well with his new lease on life. Then one day, Allan found out that he had been stung by some counterfeit money. Someone had bought a barrel from him using some phony currency. Well, Allan wasn't going to stand for this. He did a little research and discovered that there was a band of counterfeiters hiding a short way from town in the forest. After scouting out the counterfeiters' hideout himself, Allan went to the local sheriff and told him all that he had uncovered. The sheriff was impressed. He deputized Allan and the two of them went out and arrested the whole band of counterfeiters. Allan loved the rush and sense of accomplishment that this mission brought him. This brief adventure started Allan on a whole new course of life. The man who had been wanted by the police in Great Britain started working for the Kane County Sheriff's Office as a deputy. A couple years later, Allan moved to the Chicago Police Department. Then he started his own private-detective agency. Soon he had offices not only in Chicago, but in Philadelphia and New York City as well. While other private detective agencies had reputations for being sleazy organizations, Allan's soon gained the reputation of being honest and hard-working. Local police departments would often come to Allan for help in solving crimes. It was Allan and his

investigators who uncovered an early plot to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln and who subsequently proposed the organization of a national secret service department. The motto of Allan's organization was *we Never Sleep*. His graphic slogan that represented his company was an open, alert human eye. This is why we still call private investigators *private eyes*. Allan Pinkerton was a man who made many mistakes in his youth, some quite serious, but he learned from them so that he might live a productive, beneficial life and pass down a great heritage to others in the process.

One of the most important lessons that any person can learn in life is the lesson to learn from mistakes that are made. It is sad when a person makes the same mistakes over and over and over again in life.

Now there is yet another step that a truly wise person takes and that is learning from the mistakes of others. While a foolish person doesn't learn from mistakes but keeps repeating them over and over again, and an intelligent person learns from the mistakes that he makes because he has to suffer the adverse consequences of his mistakes, a truly wise person learns from the mistakes of others so that he doesn't have to make the mistakes personally in the first place. This characteristic separates many truly successful people from the rest of the pack. If a person starting a business takes time to research and study other similar businesses that have either been successful or have failed, learning good steps to follow from the successful businesses and poor steps to avoid from the failed businesses, that person is far more likely to start a successful business himself because he will be able to avoid the mistakes and pitfalls that so often hinder infant businesses from growing.

We come this morning to a study of our 6th good king of Judah. We have already looked at Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah and Uzziah. Jotham was the son of Uzziah. He is the 6th king of Judah during the time of divided monarchy who is commended as being good in the sight of the Lord. And interestingly enough, not as much is given about Jotham as most of the other good kings. But while we would certainly like to know more about this man, the brevity of his account could be a good thing in a way for there is no serious downside that is given to his reign so Ezra doesn't feel the need to balance the good that Jotham accomplished with any major failure in his life. Jotham seems to have lived a fairly consistent life of godliness throughout his reign. The one encouraging word that is given in his account that would lead us to that conclusion is that Jotham apparently learned from the mistakes of his father Uzziah. READ 2 Chron. 27:1-9:

2CH 27:1 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother's name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. ² **He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD.** The people, however, continued their corrupt practices. ³ Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple of the LORD and

did extensive work on the wall at the hill of Ophel.⁴ He built towns in the Judean hills and forts and towers in the wooded areas.

2CH 27:5 Jotham made war on the king of the Ammonites and conquered them. That year the Ammonites paid him a hundred talents of silver, ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand cors of barley. The Ammonites brought him the same amount also in the second and third years.

2CH 27:6 **Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God.**

2CH 27:7 The other events in Jotham's reign, including all his wars and the other things he did, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.⁸ He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years.⁹ Jotham rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And Ahaz his son succeeded him as king.

Now you might recall with me how Uzziah ended his otherwise powerful and illustrious reign if you were with us last week.

Uzziah enjoyed a long and prosperous reign. He was king for 52 years. And Uzziah accomplished much for the good of his people. He built a strong economy so that his people enjoyed a lengthy period of prosperity. He built a formidable military defense so that his people enjoyed peace and security. 2 times in the Chronicles account it tells us that Uzziah was famous and powerful. His fame spread throughout the entire Middle East and all the way south into Egypt. Comparative studies of Jewish kings show that during Uzziah's reign, Judah and Israel came closest to approximating the dominance that King David had achieved. There was no other time during the divided monarchy when the Jewish people enjoyed as much prosperity and peace than they had during the years when Uzziah reigned.

But if you remember from last Sunday, Uzziah didn't end up very well. His successes went to his head and his heart and head became puffed up in pride. He became so arrogant during the closing years of his life that he did the unthinkable – he forced his way into the holy place of the temple and tried to offer a personal sacrifice on the altar of incense. 81 priests tried to stop him, but they were no match for Uzziah's power. But God stopped Uzziah in an instant. As Uzziah was stretching out his hand to offer incense on the holy altar, God struck the arrogant king with leprosy. When the priests saw the leprosy break out on Uzziah's forehead, they hurried him out of the temple area. Uzziah had to move from the royal palace and live humbly in a leprosy colony outside of the city walls until the day of his death.

Now Jotham, his son, had a front row seat to this whole scene. Nobody would have been more interested in the welfare of his father than Jotham. Jotham was next in line to rule. So when Uzziah became

unfit to rule as king because of his leprous condition, Jotham became the actual, functioning king from that point on. Uzziah would have technically been king until his death – this is one of the reasons why his reign of 52 years is so much longer than Jotham’s 16 years – but Jotham would have been the functioning king. We are not given the length of years that Uzziah suffered with leprosy before his death, so we don’t know exactly how many of his 52 year reign Jotham was actually the functioning king but it likely was some period of time. To Jotham’s credit, he learned from the mistakes that his father had made so that he is one of the few kings who ended his reign well.

Now what are some advantages to learning from the mistakes of others like Jotham did? I would like to discuss 3 of these with you this morning from the life of Jotham.

***When we learn from the mistakes of others we set our lives on an accelerated path of growth?** If we don’t learn from our mistakes, we don’t grow in life. We just keep making the same mistakes over and over again.

Perhaps you heard the story about George and Jack who were avid moose hunters. They had read that moose hunting in Canada was the best around so every year they chartered a plane to drop them off in the wilds of Canada. This year, the hunting was especially good. Within their allotted time, they had each bagged a large moose and filled out their permits. But when the plane got there to pick them up, the pilot took one look at those 2 moose and said, *They’re much too heavy. I don’t think the plane will be able to fly with all that extra weight on board.* Well, George and Jack were very upset. *We spent all week hunting for these moose. The pilot we hired last year wasn’t worried about the weight,* they protested. Finally, the pilot was shamed into taking the moose on board. But true to his instincts, the overloaded plane was only aloft for a few minutes when due to the extra weight it lost altitude and was forced to make a crash landing. As the 3 men struggled out of the wreckage, the pilot said he would try to center in on their exact location so that he could call for help. Helpful Jack called out, *Tell them we’re about a mile farther than we were when we crashed last year.* Many people are like Jack and George in life. They just keep making the same mistakes over and over again. They never seem to learn from their mistakes in life. This eventually brings an attitude of hopelessness as a person seems doomed to an endless cycle in life not making any progress. But when a person learns from his or her mistakes, there is hope for a better future.

If we learn from our mistakes in life, then we have growth – we change, we learn new things, we grow. But if the only way we learn in life is from our mistakes, our growth will not be all that it can be. Our growth will be hindered because it takes time to make mistakes and suffer the consequences of those mistakes. So if the only way we are going to learn in life is the hard way, we are only going to have time for a limited number of lessons in life. On the other hand, if we learn from the mistakes that others make, then our growth

potential is unlimited. We can learn lessons that took a lifetime to learn in just minutes or hours. Our growth is greatly accelerated.

Uzziah did many good things militarily for Judah. He provided a sense of security that is important in any country. Jotham saw this and learned. Jotham also tackled defense projects – he rebuilt gates and walls, he built defense towns and forts and towers. Jotham also saw how his father’s subjection of the Ammonites to the east brought good results to his country. So Jotham continued with this as a priority. The Ammonites continued to have to pay tribute to Judah that filled Jotham’s coffers so that he was able to have the resources to do many other projects and become a powerful king.

But Jotham also learned from the mistakes of his father as well. Uzziah wasted a good portion of his reign because of his arrogance and pride. Uzziah spent what should have been his most productive years when he was older and should have been wiser separated from the Jewish community in a leprous colony. Jotham didn’t waste that time because while he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord like his father had done, unlike his father, he did not enter the temple of the Lord.

*A 2nd advantage of learning from the mistakes of others is **We avoid having to suffer the consequences of mistakes ourselves.**

Now this is a very important advantage. If it weren’t for the consequences of mistakes, they would be kind of fun to make at times, wouldn’t they? After all, making a mistake can be adventuresome, it can bring a great rush to take a big risk, it can be spontaneous and exciting, there is often a feeling of power. But then the consequence of a poor decision comes – and that’s not so fun.

Poor Uzziah. Now we can’t feel too sorry for him because he had nobody to blame but himself. He had made the decision to enter the holy place against the advice of 81 priests. But what a consequence he had to bear for this foolish, foolish decision. You have to pity a person who spends the waning years of his life and dies the painful, lonely death of a leper.

But one good result that came from Uzziah’s mistake was the simple fact that Jotham learned from it. As Jotham was ruling from the palace in Jerusalem, watching his father die his horrible death from afar, Jotham learned the dangers of becoming puffed up in arrogance and pride. Now we must not forget that Uzziah probably also learned these lessons. There was no more humbling experience in Judah during the 8th century B.C. than being a leper. Lepers were the outcasts of society. Lepers had to live in communities by themselves. Lepers were required by law to cry out *unclean, unclean* if any normal, healthy person happened to come close to them by mistake. Being a leper was the most humbling experience possible in those days. This is why God struck Uzziah with leprosy. God was chastening His child. Far more than leprosy ever could, pride and arrogance were ruining Uzziah’s life. They had caused him to willfully disobey the commandments

of God in the most public and ostentatious manner possible. God knew that Uzziah needed to be humbled. And the leprosy would have done that job very nicely. Uzziah no doubt had a better relationship with God and more meaningful fellowship with God during the last years of his life as a leper than he had in the few years before his leprosy when his heart had been puffed up in pride. But along with the valuable lesson learned, Uzziah also had to suffer the horrible consequence of leprosy.

Jotham was able to learn the lesson without the consequence. What a blessing this was for him. It is always a great blessing to learn some valuable lesson without having to suffer any adverse consequences along the way. That is what can happen when we learn lessons from the mistakes of others.

*A 3rd advantage of learning from the mistakes of others is we give hope and encouragement to others.

I can't tell you how good Jotham makes me feel and how much hope Jotham has probably given to many other Christians as well as they are rounding their middle aged years and preparing to enter the home stretch in life. There are so many righteous, godly people in the Bible who started out well, did many good things, but then blew it at the end of their lives like Uzziah.

*There are many, of course, who don't even start out well. Of the 40 kings who ruled over Israel and Judah during the divided monarchy period, 32 weren't even considered to be good at all. They didn't even start out well.

*But then there were the 8 who we are studying. 8 kings of whom it is said that they were righteous, they were good kings. But of these 8, most of them didn't end up well. Just think of the kings that we have studied so far:

-Asa didn't trust in the Lord near the end of his life. He consulted only the physicians and not the Lord when he had the fatal infection in his feet near the end of his life.

-Jehoshaphat made the foolish alliance with Israel that brought Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, into a position of power in Judah late in his life.

-Joash turned from following the Lord after his godly mentor, Jehoiada, died.

-Amaziah became puffed up in pride over his military victory over Edom and foolishly attacked Israel suffering a humiliating defeat late in his reign.

-and we've talked about how Uzziah ended his reign enough times so that we all know the story by heart.

It almost comes to the point where we wonder if it's possible for someone to finish the race well when we read about leader after leader failing near the end of his life.

But here comes Jotham. Not as much is said about him as the others. But from all appearances, he finished the race well. He walked steadfastly before the Lord his God. He was able to do this in part because he learned from the mistakes of others. And this brings hope and encouragement to us. Yes, it is possible for a person to live a righteous life and then finish the race well. Abraham did. Joseph did. Daniel did. Peter did. Paul did. And while not as famous as these others, Jotham did as well.

Mistakes can be beneficial to us because they can teach us lessons that never could be learned in any other ways. But an even greater blessing is found if we don't have to make the mistakes ourselves. If we consistently learn from the mistakes of others, we will not only achieve maximum growth in our own lives, but we will also be a source of hope and encouragement to others as well.