

# No Offense?

Taken from 2 Kings 16

## Foundation

Spend a moment praying and getting your heart settled before the Lord. Ask Him to give you the desire and passion to live for Him—no matter what others may think.



*Do you know people who are more concerned about offending others than they are about offending God?*

King Ahaz of Judah sighed as he thought about his difficulties. Unlike his father and grandfather (King Jotham and King Uzziah), he didn't seek after God with his heart. Instead Ahaz chose to make idols of Baal and worship them in the high places. He even set up pagan altars for burning incense on the hilltops and among the trees, leading the people into idolatry. Because of the wickedness in Judah, God would judge the kingdom and use the powerful nations of Aram and Assyria against it.

*Perhaps their God is stronger than ours, Ahaz thought when he suffered defeat at the hands of the Arameans. From now on, we will worship the god of the Arameans in addition to our God, and hopefully be able to stand stronger against our enemies!*

Although King Ahaz was pleased with his own reasoning, God was not. Instead of success, King Ahaz continued to suffer defeat. Even the king of the

northern tribes of Israel came against Judah, raiding and taking captives back with him. In one day, Ahaz lost 120,000 soldiers, while 200,000 wives, sons, and daughters were carried off from Judah with the rest of the plunder.

King Ahaz grew both frustrated and fearful. However, instead of turning back to the Lord, he turned to the Assyrians for help. King Ahaz knew the Assyrians were a powerful nation greatly feared by many. So, without further thought he removed the valuable silver and gold out of the Lord's temple and also the silver and gold from the royal treasury and gave it all to the Assyrian king with the following message: "I will be your servant and am willing to live under your control. Please accept my gifts and protect me from the hand of the Arameans and from Israel!"

King Tiglath-Pileser readily accepted the gifts, attacked the Aramean capital of Damascus, and deported its people to Kir. He then killed the Aramean king and claimed Damascus for himself. King Ahaz felt relief and freedom—not realizing he had opened a dangerous door of opportunity to the power-hungry nation of Assyria.

In an effort to express his thanks to the Assyrian king, King Ahaz personally traveled to the newly captured Damascus. Upon arriving, he was impressed by a large pagan altar he saw there. *This is what I need!* Ahaz said to himself. He drew a detailed sketch of the altar, sent it to Uriah the priest, and ordered one to be built just like it. Uriah did accordingly.

Upon returning home, King Ahaz was pleased with the results. The larger-styled altar was impressive and looked just like the one he had admired in Damascus.

**King Ahaz's grandfather, King Azariah (Uzziah), ruled for fifty years and built up Judah's army, strengthened agriculture, and improved water supplies. Unfortunately, he had neglected to tear down the high places used for pagan worship, which later became Judah's undoing.**

“From now on, sacrifices will be made upon this new altar,” Ahaz proclaimed with delight. “The bronze altar symbolizing God will be used only occasionally when I am in need of guidance, but for nothing more than that,” he added, moving it out of the way. Sadly, King Ahaz would seek little wisdom from the Lord.

King Ahaz looked around and decided to change more than just the sacred altar.

“Strip away the side panels and remove the basins from the portable water carts,” Ahaz suggested. He then took the large basin in which the priests were to wash and removed it from the backs of the twelve bronze oxen and placed it on a stone base. King Ahaz “remodeled” and removed several of the furnishings of the temple of the Lord—even taking down the Sabbath canopy constructed for the temple.

“There!” Ahaz remarked as he finished by removing the king’s royal entryway into the temple. He did it out of courtesy and respect for the Assyrian king. “That will show honor to the king and no one will be offended,” Ahaz stated triumphantly.

But Ahaz was mistaken. He had given no consideration to what might offend God.

### ***Footwork***

Open your Bible and turn past the Book of 2 Kings until you get to 2 Chronicles 28:24-25.

(Chapter 28 of 2 Chronicles is the “companion” passage to 2 Kings 16 and gives additional information about King Ahaz and his actions.) According to verses 24 and 25, what else did King Ahaz do?



Whether he realized it or not, King Ahaz was getting rid of the “signs” that connected him to the Lord and worship of the one true God—all in the name of trying not to “offend” men. We often do the same, only in subtle ways—such as not bowing our heads to give God thanks for a meal we’re eating in public, or remaining silent when we should speak up for the Lord. In an effort not to cause offense, we hide the truth of who we really are and all that God means to us. In so doing, we commit the greatest offense—offense against God.

Take a moment to examine your heart. If the prayer below expresses how you feel, print it out, pray it, and then sign and date it. Refer back to this as a reminder when your courage wanes:

*Lord, please forgive me for the times I’ve been ashamed or afraid to call You my own. I desire to live for You, and I want others to see a difference in my life. Please help me to be more courageous and bold. I desire to please You more than anyone else.*

*(Signed)*

*(Today’s date)*