

**1st Kings 21: 1-29; “Confronting Ahab’s Sins”, Message # 15 in the series –
“Lessons from the Life of Elijah”, A Bible Study conducted
by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 24th, 2018,
for those gathered at his home.**

In these verses we will see that Ahab and Jezebel’s sins are confronted by Elijah, his having been sent by God to do so. This was the office of the Old Testament prophet; to bring God’s word to those kings and queens of Israel who were disobedient to God’s holy law. But I think that we can learn from this passage many good things about every believer’s responsibility to reprove others when they behold the sinful intentions and actions of people in authority. This is the duty, not only of prophets, or pastors in New Testament times, but it is also the duty of every Christian to speak up as they have opportunity to do so, when they realize that someone is intending to commit sin, or has committed sin that has public, personal, and national implications. The Lord can use his own dear people to confront the sins, or prospective sins, of people in public office, as the situation arises, and each of us must be sensitive to what the Lord would have us to do in particular. So tonight I would 1st of all like to open up for you Naboth’s confrontation of Ahab’s sins in relation to himself. 2nd – Elijah’s confrontation of Ahab’s sins. And then 3rd – Ahab’s response to Elijah’s confrontation of his sins. In looking at these things it is my prayer that each one of us would be instructed on what it might mean for us to reprove a person who is doing wickedly so that they might turn away from their wickedness and learn to do righteousness.

1st of all – Naboth’s confrontation of Ahab’s sins in relation to himself.

Verse 2 – “So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it.’ “Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.” “And Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!’” So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ “And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food.” Now, we must ask ourselves why Naboth felt that he could not sell his garden land which was adjacent to Ahab’s palace, as not every request from a sovereign was wrong, essentially, to them, or to us today. The reason is found in Leviticus 25: 23-28. “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me. And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land.” “If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold. Or if the man has no one to redeem it, but he himself becomes able to redeem it, then let him count the years since its sale, and restore the remainder to the man to whom he sold it, that he may return to his possession. But if he is not able to have it restored to himself, then what was sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the Year of Jubilee; and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession.”

You can see here that the land of each of the Hebrew people, should not be sold permanently, for the land was God’s. In other words, God has had specific purposes for it from the beginning of its possession by the children of Israel. It is called Immanuel’s land in Isaiah 8: 8, and it was typical of the spiritual blessings which the Lord Jesus Christ would purchase for all believers so that they would have an everlasting inheritance. And for Israel, every tribe, when they first entered the land, was divided a particular portion of it, so that they should live there. They inherited certain specific territories when they came into the land, in the days of Joshua. They were assigned their inheritance by the commandment of the Lord, by Moses, so that it is said in Joshua 14: 1 – “Now these are the territories which the sons of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the household of the tribes of the

sons of Israel apportioned to them for an inheritance.” Since this was the law, it would be wrong, therefore, for the Jewish man, to permanently sell his property, especially to a king as it was in this case, because he would never get his land back again. This Naboth knew, and so that is why he said – “The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!”

Ahab’s sin in this case was covetousness, a violation of the 10th commandment of the 10 commandments. Deuteronomy 5: 21 – “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” You can see by Ahab’s reaction to this statement that he didn’t really care one whit for the commandments of God, either moral or ceremonial. He simply could not believe that Naboth would not let him buy the piece of land that he desired. Verse 4b – “And Ahab lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food.” Now, this was the same reaction that we are told that he expressed after he was confronted by a prophet in Chapter 20, verse 43. “So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.” There in that place, he was vexed in his spirit because he was told that since he had let Ben-Hadad slip out of his hands, a man whom the Lord had appointed to destruction, that his life would go for Ben-Hadad’s. The judgments of God were coming upon him, and these judgments vexed him.

Let us understand that it was a good thing for Naboth to have confronted Ahab with his wrong desires and his sin in this case. His words were intended by Naboth to be a rebuke or a reproof to him. Ahab should not have been sullen and displeased with Naboth. He should not have taken to his bed, in his palace in Samaria, and turned his face to the wall. If he was to be sullen and displeased, he should have been sullen and displeased with himself. And if he took to his bed, to turn his face to the wall, it should have been because he was mourning over his own sins. He should have understood the truth of Matthew 5: 4 – “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” And Proverbs 5: 23 – “For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” But Ahab was acting like he was sick and about to die because he could not obtain this land which he should not have asked for in the first place. Sinful desires are a sickness of the soul that only God’s grace can heal. These kinds of desires whether they be the covetousness of Ahab, or the sexual immorality of Amnon the Son of David, who it says in 2nd Samuel 13: 2, “was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick, for she was a virgin.” “And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her.” These unlawful desires always lead to more drastic measures to obtain what that person thinks that they cannot live without.

Does this mean, then, that Naboth should not have told Ahab no; that he could not have his vineyard? No, it rather means that we should understand that he knew that it was his responsibility to speak the truth and try to confront and acquaint Ahab with the fact that he was asking him to do something that was wrong. And we should understand that it is our responsibility to do the same, even when it persons who are in authority who are trying to get us do something that is wrong. Let’s look at few of the Proverbs to establish this truth. Proverbs 10: 17 – “He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses reproof goes astray.” You see, if a person is wise they will receive instruction from the Bible and from righteous people who are trying to reprove them when they need it. It is the way of life. It is the way to all the blessings of God being bestowed upon you. But the person who refuses reproof, like Ahab did, goes astray. They will sin in the things that that they think, say, and do. This is what happened to Ahab.

Look at Proverbs 12: 1. “Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.” You can see here that in Ahab’s case, he did not love instruction from the righteous. Instead, we see, that he was willing to listen to the sinful instructions of Jezebel’s counsel of lying and murder. Proverbs 15: 10 – “Harsh correction is for him who forsakes the way, and he who hates reproof will die.” This is exactly what Ahab did in this situation, and he did it because he did not love reproof, but he hated it. And Proverbs 15: 31 and 32 – “The ear that hears the reproof of life will abide among the wise.” “He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds reproof gets understanding.” You can see very clearly, can’t you, that hearing reproof will

lead to your abiding among the wise; among God's true people, who worship and live their lives to God, and according to His word. If you heed the reproof of the principles of the truth which you find in the Bible, or that which you hear from the lips of a righteous man, you will get the correct understanding of what you should do in every situation that you find yourself. If you disdain the instruction that reproof brings, you will be despising your own soul.

2nd – We want to think together about Elijah's confrontation of Ahab's sins.

Having not heeded the good reproof of Naboth, we have now seen that Ahab went into his palace in Samaria with a sullen and displeased spirit, and he turned his face to the wall and he lay down on his bed, and he wouldn't eat any food. But his wicked wife Jezebel heard that he was sullen and that he was not eating any food, and so she came to him to find out the reason why. He tells her in verse 6 – "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.'" "And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" And so Jezebel said to him, "You now exercise authority over Israel!" "Arise and eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." What did she plan to do to secure the vineyard for Ahab? First she tells him a lie. Since you are king, you can do whatever you want to do, because you are the man in authority. But she failed entirely to remind him or herself that God's law is our final authority for everything that we do, and it governs all men and it dictates what true righteous behavior is. Even kings and queens, or anyone in authority, can think sinfully, reason sinfully, and sin badly, if they forget or ignore the precepts and principles of God.

Did she send a note to him to try to persuade him? Did she send representatives to talk with him? No, she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent these letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. And in these letters she contrived the destruction of Naboth's reputation and the taking of his life. She had these nobles do this in a phony religious way. She told them to proclaim a fast. She told them to proceed in a treacherous way. They were to seat Naboth with high honor among the people, and then two scoundrels were to come in and sit before him and witness against him that he had blasphemed God and the king. And all of this, they sinfully and stupidly went along with. And then they took him outside and stoned him with stones, so that he died. And following this, when they reported back to Jezebel that they had done these wicked deeds, she joyfully went to Ahab and told him that he should now arise and take possession of the vineyard, for now Naboth was dead and nothing would stand in his way! Ahab, instead of being horrified by these acts of treachery and murder, gets up and goes down to take possession of the vineyard, as though it was the most reasonable thing in the world. See what a covetous man will go along with in order to obtain what he wants.

But, let us always remember that all the wicked acts of men, God sees perfectly. They are all remembered by Him to punish them at the right time, if they do not repent. They are all done before Him, the righteous Judge, and if they do not confess them with a view to forsaking them, they will perish in their sins. We should observe that God certainly can bring swift judgment against any wicked person, any time He pleases, if He decides to do so. In this case he did so. He told Elijah to immediately go down to the vineyard to confront Ahab about his sins and tell him the consequences of them. When Elijah went down to the vineyard to do this, Ahab called to him and said – "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He had called Elijah "the troubler of Israel" back in 1st Kings 18: 17. And now Ahab feared his coming to him at this very time, because he knew that Elijah had not come to speak good to him, he now sees Elijah as his enemy. The person with a guilty conscience will never like to be in the presence of a preacher who is called of God to declare God's word to him. We see here that it is not the job of the preacher to soften the impact of the word of God preached, to spare guilty sinners from their seeing their sins clearly. Rather, it is his duty to address the conscience of the sinner and declare to him his guilt in the sight of the holy God. It is therefore imperative for all the members of a local church to pray for the pastor that he will be faithful to address the consciences of the hearers where it is needed, and to

straightforwardly declare and apply all of the word of God so that sins in people's lives will be seen by them, and that they might be given grace by God to repent of them.

In Ahab's case, God had shown him much common grace and given him a long space of time to repent, and instead of repenting of his many sins and turning away from false religion, he had been ignoring altogether, the commandments of God, the striving of the Holy Spirit with him, and he had indeed "sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up". So God had Elijah declare to Ahab that he had murdered and also taken possession of Ahab's vineyard, but "in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs would lick his blood also. (verse 19) And God would bring calamity on him and take away his posterity, and cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. And He would make Ahab's house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which Ahab had provoked God to anger, and made Israel to sin. Let us see that God does know how to judge every man according to his works. May it lead each of us to a complete and thorough repentance from all sin, and the great desire that we would be able to walk with our Lord in integrity and in uprightness of heart.

3rd – Let us think about Ahab's response to Elijah's confrontation of his sins.

Verse 27 says – "So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning." "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me?' "Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days; but in the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house." Now, it seems from Ahab's behavior here, that he was a truly repentant man. But this was not the case, for his heart was never changed to really turn from his sins. He was simply upset that his sin had found him out and that there were going to be these awful consequences which would come to him and to Jezebel. He thought that he might be able to avert them. This would not be the case. But I want you to see that God really does see all of our works. He sees when we are humbling ourselves before Him. And He sees why we are humbling ourselves before him; whether it is a selfish humbling, simply not wanting to be under God's hand of judgment, or whether it is a true humbling which is seeking God for grace to turn away from all of our sins. Ahab's was the former. Let ours be the latter.

God may stay the calamity and not bring it in Ahab's days, but He would not go back on His words of judgment concerning the utter destruction of Ahab and Jezebel and His sending them to hell. Let your repentance be like Hezekiah's in Isaiah 38. Hezekiah was sick and near death, and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him – "Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth, and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.'" "And Hezekiah wept bitterly." "Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, saying, 'God and say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years.'" And then in verses 16 and 17 he says – "O Lord, by these things men live; and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so You will restore me and make me live." "Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back." This is true repentance, and this is how God always answers the truly humble.