

## **Are You for Sale?**

1 Kings 21:1-16; Proverbs 23:23

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Daily we face temptations that challenge us with who is our Lord, who owns us, whose money, whose home, whose job, whose clothing, whose gifts and abilities, whose body, whose family, and whose truth is it? Is it ours? Or is it the Lord's?

You see, dear ones, it is very easy to give the right answer to these questions when you have been exposed to the truth of Jesus Christ. But it is quite different to live out the right answer to those questions every day; for that is where the answers to those questions will be seen before your family, before your neighbors, before your co-workers, before your teachers and fellow students, before your Christian brethren, and before the Lord God Almighty (who sees all and knows all).

Are you for sale to the temptation that offers you what you want? Who owns you? The main points from our text today are the following: (1) Ahab's Covetousness (1 Kings 21:1-2,4); (2) Naboth's Faithfulness (1 Kings 21:3); (3) Jezebel's Conspiracy (1 Kings 21:5-16).

### **I. Ahab's Covetousness (1 Kings 21:1-2,4).**

A. In the previous chapter (1 Kings 20), the Lord had mercifully preserved King Ahab and Israel from the destruction of the Syrians and had given Ahab two mighty victories over the overwhelming numbers of King Ben-hadad and the Syrian coalition. After the second victory, Ahab set free the very enemy (Ben-hadad) that had sought the destruction of Israel. The Lord God sent His prophet to rebuke the "mercy" of Ahab to this wicked enemy that would continue to be a great thorn in the flesh of Israel (1 Kings 20:42). This rebuke sent Ahab into a sad and despondent spirit as he returned to his palace in Samaria (1 Kings 20:43). Feeling sorry for himself that he had been rebuked by the Lord, but no repentance, no sorrow over his sin, no shame, and no confession. Dear ones, when there is correction and rebuke from the Lord (through His Word, by His Spirit, by means of the minister, husband, wife, parent, or neighbor), how do you respond: like Ahab here, or like David (Psalm 51:3-4)? Your response to God's rebuke for sin evidences either spiritual death or spiritual life.

B. As we now begin 1 Kings 21, Ahab's brooding over God's rebuke is removed at the prospect of adding a vineyard to his property that is adjacent to his other palace in Jezreel (1 Kings 21:1).

1. Here is how the wicked respond to the feelings of sadness, conviction, and guilt over their sin. They turn their attention away from everything that reminds them of their sin, and they replace that conviction with their lusts and desires. Drown that conviction with covetousness. Turn down the volume of conviction and turn up the volume to that which is pleasing to the ear and to the flesh. Dear ones, beware of this temptation to switch covetousness for conviction. It will deceive you and lead you to a desensitized conscience.

2. What precedes covetousness is discontentment with what God has already given to you by His mercy. When you are not thankful for the goodness of God as you look at your life, you will be discontent and find little joy in the Lord. Ask yourself: Why am I unhappy and discontent? Is it not because at that moment you are more focused on what you do not have than what you do have? Is it not because you think you will find joy and happiness if only this or that was different about your present situation? If you cannot learn contentment in your present situation, you are only deceiving yourself that you will find it in a different situation.

3. The real problem is not that person in your life (who is a thorn in your flesh), or your job,

or your afflictions and trials. You cannot blame others for your lack of joy and contentment. The real problem is you have not found your joy and contentment in Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:11-13). You are looking for joy elsewhere. The Holy Spirit declares that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Why? Covetousness exalts what you want over what God wants for you. How do you know if your desires have become covetous? If God delays or does not give that which you desire, are you yet filled with joy, peace, and contentment knowing that you already have so much more in Jesus Christ than you could possibly deserve? Dear ones, we must break this sinful cycle of discontentment leading to idolatrous covetousness through God's grace of a broken and thankful heart at the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It is hard to endure disappointment, delay in answers to prayer, and the sins of others. But if you believe any of these things are greater than the grace of God, then you will continue to wallow in your misery rather than in a thankful heart. Why would you sell a joyful and thankful heart for the misery of discontent and covetous heart? You don't have to by God's grace.

4. How do we know for sure that Ahab was covetous over this vineyard that belonged to Naboth? He was not content when he was rejected (1 Kings 21:4). That is the test, dear ones, for you as well.

C. Now we find Ahab's offer to Naboth, which in and of itself was reasonable (1 Kings 21:2). Ahab offered to buy the vineyard of Naboth at a fair price or to give Naboth a better vineyard than the one that he had. Ahab's covetousness is not fully realized until Naboth refuses the offer. That is why even in your desires and longings that are expressed in prayer or expressed by way of a fair proposal, you can discern whether your desires and longings are idolatrous or not by asking yourself, Will I yet find my joy, peace, and contentment in the Lord and in His love even if I am refused.

## **II. Naboth's Faithfulness (1 Kings 21:3).**

A. Naboth refused to sell or exchange his vineyard to King Ahab.

1. Did Naboth refuse because of stubbornness, because of greed in holding out for a better offer, or because of vindictiveness and hatred for Ahab? No, Naboth refused to sell his vineyard in order to be faithful to the will of God and out of love for his posterity. For the greatest value of that vineyard to Naboth was not due to its financial worth, but was due to its divine worth—it was a Divine inheritance.

2. This was property that the Lord had divided among the tribes and families of Israel. So it was first and foremost God's vineyard. The Lord stipulated that none of it was to be sold to those outside their tribe and family. But if in extreme hardship the land was sold, it was to be returned to the original owner in the Year of Jubilee (every 50 years), so that their family inheritance passed not to another tribe or family (Leviticus 25:23-28; Numbers 36:7). This was a judicial law of the Old Testament to Israel, but it was binding then upon God's people in the land of promise.

3. So Naboth's refusal was not unkind, bitter, or disrespectful to King Ahab. Naboth courageously declined to sell his vineyard because to do so would have been disobedience and unfaithfulness to the Lord who owned it and had given it as an inheritance to Naboth and his posterity. Naboth was not only showing his fear of God and love for God's commandments, but was demonstrating his love for his posterity and the inheritance God called him to pass along to them in faithfulness. Naboth was not for sale nor was his vineyard as his inheritance from the Lord.

B. Application.

1. Many in Israel no doubt would have sold the vineyard to Ahab. "What's the big deal? That was a command from the Lord so many hundreds of years earlier. Surely, that command has been lost in the memory of nearly all. No one is going to reproach Naboth for taking advantage of such a good deal. It might even have some payoff and reward later on with Ahab." Yes, that is the way the world looks at God's commands. The world asks, "How will this benefit me?" Whereas the faithful servant of the Lord asks, "How will this please God, bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, and honor Him? Dear ones, there is a fundamental

difference in obeying God in order to receive something by way of payback, and obeying Him because He is your Lord (and owns you) and because He is your Savior (and has redeemed you). We do not obey to receive. We obey to love, honor, and submit ourselves to Jesus Christ who gave Himself to rescue us from the hell we deserved. And though the Lord owes us nothing for our obedience (it's our love bound duty), He yet graciously rewards us when we obey Him. Our faithfulness and obedience to the Lord cannot be based upon whether we believe it's an important command or not. Our faithfulness and obedience is based upon God's absolute authority, "Thus saith the LORD!"

2. Dear ones, whenever we disobey God's good command in order to gain some pleasure of the world, the flesh, or the devil, or to gain some peace with others at the price of the truth, or to gain some financial prize, or to gain approval in the eyes of family or friends, we have sold our inheritance—we have acted unfaithfully and have sold ourselves. You see, you are declaring throughout the day who is your Lord—the world, the flesh, the devil, or the Lord Jesus? This begins at the deep level of your inward affections and issues forth in your outward actions. Who has your heart? God or someone or something else? Who or what is your treasure? God or someone or something else? It was not because the vineyard was in itself so valuable to Naboth. It was because it was given to him by the Lord, and he was commanded to pass it on to his posterity that made it so valuable. Is that how valuable the truth of Jesus Christ is to you (in doctrine, in worship, in covenant faithfulness)?

3. In 1681 faithful Covenanters in Scotland were put to the test by the Scottish Parliament wherein it was required of all holding positions in church and state to swear allegiance to King Charles II as "the only supreme governor of this realm, over all persons, and in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil" (rather than Jesus being the only Head of the Church). The Test Act declared the National Covenant of Scotland and the Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Kingdoms to be unlawful. The faithful Naboths of that time who were unwilling to sell their inheritance received from the Lord in exchange for their positions suffered greatly. Most were Ahab's that were willing to compromise and sell their inheritance to maintain their positions in the church and state. But faithful Naboths like young James Renwick would not barter with something of eternal value—the truth of Jesus Christ. He was eventually hung because he and the truth were not for sale (Proverbs 23:23; Proverbs 22:28).

4. Dear ones, are you for sale? Will you sell out to those who will give you what you want (the lusts of the flesh, the pleasures in this life, the friendship of the world, the success of your dreams and ambitions)? The temptation is always there—just move the landmark a little—the ends justify the means—everybody does it and you do not want to look different. Every day we will either follow Ahab who was willing to sell his soul to have what he wanted, or we will follow Naboth who was unwilling to sell or exchange his Divine inheritance.

### **III. Jezebel's Conspiracy (1 Kings 21:5-16).**

A. When Jezebel finds Ahab with saddened countenance and once again brooding over the rebuke of the Lord (1 Kings 21:5), she takes matters into her own hands (though Ahab was still responsible for her doing so). Ahab misrepresented Naboth (1 Kings 21:6). Jezebel does what Ahab likely desired to do. She conspires with the elders of Jezreel (who were for sale) to falsely accuse Naboth of blaspheming God and the king by means of calling a fast to address some serious danger confronting the city of Jezreel and then to hire false witnesses to lie that they had heard Naboth blaspheme God and the king (1 Kings 21:7-12). Naboth was immediately condemned by the elders of Jezreel and taken outside the city and stoned to death and the elders informed Jezebel that Naboth was dead (1 Kings 21:13-14). Jezebel announced to Ahab that Naboth was dead, that the vineyard was his, and he seizes it (1 Kings 21:15-16).

B. Was there a more sinister, dastardly deed ever done? As a matter of fact there was. For in this historical person of faithful Naboth is prefigured the faithful Lord Jesus Christ, who told the devil when He was

tempted that He was not for sale—every temptation was met with “It is written.” And because the Lord Jesus would not sell Himself to be in the good graces of the Jewish leaders but rather kept faithfully the commandments of God for us, He was falsely accused, immediately sentenced to death for blasphemy, and taken outside the city to be crucified for the sake of those Ahabs given to Him to save from all eternity—that He might pass on to His posterity, an eternal inheritance more valuable than anyone or anything in this world. This, dear ones, is the truth behind the account of Naboth.

C. There is one more truth behind this account of Naboth. Jezebel was the mother of harlots in promoting her false religion and in having united with Ahab, the king of Israel. Together Ahab and Jezebel point forward in history in which the Church of Rome (the mother of harlots, Revelation 17) would join with the Civil Beast of the restored Holy Roman Empire (Revelation 13) beginning in 800 A.D. to crush all the faithful Naboths who would not sell themselves or the truth to gain the pleasures of this world or their own lives (Revelation 12:11). And just as Naboth of old did not sell himself or the truth for fame, riches, success, and the approval of man, so will those who are faithful to Jesus Christ (the Great Naboth) likewise do (not perfection but faithfulness). In the death and resurrection of our Greater Naboth we receive our inheritance to pass on to our posterity. Come to Jesus Christ. He has come to save only those who know they are Ahabs before God. Let us renew our covenant to be the Lord’s and in faithfulness to pass on to our posterity the inheritance of the gospel and truth of Jesus Christ in word and in deed. Amen.

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