

THE MAN WHO WAS NOT FOR SALE

I Kings 21:3

We have a strange story of a man by the name of Naboth - the man who was not for sale. To me this is one of the strangest dramas in the entire Bible. This chapter was also interesting from the standpoint of another man by the name of Ahab, that the Scripture says in Verse 20 and 25 - that he had sold out to work evil.

We hope to concentrate tonight on the man who was not for sale, rather than the man who did sell out.

The story speaks about love, courage, and the fear of God. The other side - the story speaks about covetousness, hatred, false-witnessing, death, and the final judgement of God.

Now when someone sells out there are usually several characters that are involved in it. In fact, there are about 7 different characters in this story and maybe if we took just a moment to mention these 7 characters involved - it will help us get the idea about the man Naboth who was not for sale.

The first character is Naboth. He was a humble, God-fearing man. And he owned some property - he had a vineyard in Jezreel. This was a very productive vineyard. The fruit was plentiful and bountiful. And this man, the owner of it, had received it as an inheritance from his father - who had gotten it from his father. And so it was a vineyard that had been in the family since the time that Moses and Joshua had lotted the land out to the tribes.

Naboth would not sell his vineyard. It was not for sale. He was not flattered with the interview of the king who came to see him. And he was not impressed at all by the invitation that the royal palace offered him another piece of property.

The second character is Ahab. He was the son of Ormi. And he was the 7th king of the Northern kingdom.

His capitol was at Samaria but he lived in (Jezreel) in an ivory palace, surrounded by pleasures and luxuries.

The writer of I Kings summarizes him when he wrote, but there was none liken unto Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel, his wife - stirred up. I Kings 21-25.

The third character is the queen Jezebel. Now she was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. She was the queen of Ahab, a worshipper of Baal. She supported 450 prophets of Baal. I Kings 18:19. She killed all the prophets of God on whom she could lay her hands. I Kings 18:4-13.

Now Ahab, her husband, broke the 10th commandment. Deut. 17:18.

Now the queen broke the 6th, the 8th, the 9th, and the 10th commandments.

Now the fourth character in this story are two men who served as false witnesses. The men of Belial. They were instruments in the hands of others. They were guilty of being false witnesses and they were guilty of murder. In fact, they broke the 6th and 9th commandments. They cast the first stone and they were not ministers of God - they were ministers of Satan.

The fifth character would be the corrupt politicians. The elders and nobles, Those who feared Jezebel more than they feared God. They were men of the law. Who in the name of the law violated all the laws of God and man. They were in defiance of the law - Ex. 23:2, 6. Deut. 16:19.

The sixth character was the prophet Elijah - the Tishbite. He was a man of righteous power. He listened to God's word and he proclaimed God's word and he had a part in this story.

The seventh and final character is God. God is portrayed here as a God who watches over and sees the activities of men. Here, he is pictured as a God of anger and judgement. And a God of punishment - also one of mercy.

Now let me, at this point in our message tonight, take this moment to review this story for you. As we think about the man who was not for sale. Naboth had a vineyard - the king wanted it. Naboth felt that he could not sell it and he could not give it away. On the other hand, Ahab and the queen were

determined to have the vineyard at any cost. But Naboth could not be bought because he said he was not for sale. And this story is most interesting as you look in the palace of Samaria - and you see lying on a bed a helpless, dejected, moaning man. And you would ask your question, what happened to the king? Has death entered the palace halls? Some members of his family passed away? Has some war swept over his territory? Has something happened to bring about the sadness in his heart?

Here is a king - owning vast territories - living in an ivory palace and owning wide fertile plains. But there is one little (patch of ground) owned by Naboth and he has resolved to have it but he cannot get it. Now is Naboth being discourteous.

Remember this, the (soil) of Israel did not belong to Ahab, nor did it belong to Naboth - it was the (property of Jehovah). By the law of Moses, the owner of that vineyard at Jezreel was prohibited from parting with his inheritance. Even in the case where death necessitated the transfer of property, there was always the condition that it could be redeemed at any time by the original possessor, and moreover - even without money redemption would take place on the arrival of the jubilee year - when that arrived. And so the Lord forbid it to be given away because it was a heritage. Therefore, beyond any compensation of all of Ahab's gold - Naboth was a patriotic Israelite - he feared God. And this little ancestral plot of ground, he felt, was something that he must be loyal to God who was greater than Ahab. There would be no bribe - he would refuse to be bought. I must obey God rather than man.

And of course when Ahab realized this, he jumped into his chariot, drives 25 miles to Samaria, and is insulted and gets in bed. And the tears begin to roll down his cheeks. At that point the queen gets his ring, and causes a letter

to be written to the nobles of Jezreel. She proclaims a fast. Now this is high treason, to accuse Naboth of blasphemy. She gets two evil men to be witnesses - two sons of Belial. And she bribes these witnesses - and so in the name of religion she proclaims a fast. And Naboth is charged with a fictional crime. And all is summarized that vengeance will fall upon his head. He has blasphemed God and the king. Because the king is a representative of God. And this was a bold transgression. Immediately Naboth was stoned with stones. This innocent man in cold blood was massacred.

It took ^{Ahab} ~~Naboth~~ just a few minutes to get down and claim the coveted vineyard. He went down to take possession of it and of course his horse bear him on the highway and soon stands right in the middle of the vineyard. And that's when the prophet, the preacher Elijah comes. And this man of God, hast thou found me oh mine enemy. I have found thee, is the reply. Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of God. And he goes on to tell him that the wild dogs of the city are going to make a banquet on the flesh of his son. And of course the chariot of Ahab was washed in the fountain of Samaria and the dogs did lick his blood. And of course the judgement upon the woman was something that was awful. Because when they came to bury her - there was nothing left more than the skull and the feet and the palms of the hands. And this little story tells us to beware of covetousness - that when God has some appointed lot it needs to be preserved. This little story tells us to keep out of the way of temptations and unprincipled unions and not sell yourself to work iniquity. Beware of sin that we will be found out.

Now very pointedly and logically - let us look at the man who was not for sale, Naboth.

I. HE LOVES GOD, AND HE LOVES GOD'S LAW

In V. (3) - We discover that Naboth loved God first. He was a man that sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness - Matt. 6:33, tells us.

Naboth loved the Lord God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind. Matt. 22:37.

Therefore, he could not sell out to the wicked king. The man who loved God supremely will not sell out to the devil and the devil's crowd.

A pilot teaching a friend how to enter a harbor pointed out two lights and said, when you get those two lights in direct line, you are in the channel that will take you into the harbor. When man lines up so to speak, love for God - love for his neighbor, he will be in line for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now Naboth had lined up his love for God, his love for man, and he was heading for Heaven.

There were three things that stood in the way of selling his vineyard to Ahab. Because he had a love.

✓ First, his (duty to God.) Lev. 25:23.

Numbers 36:7,8, 9.

He knew about the laws of God. Ahab knew about them too. To Naboth the law of God was a living reality. To Ahab, the king, it was just a dead letter. To Naboth, no one's will was to be compared with God's will. And to Ahab the king, God's will was really nothing to him.

✓ The second thing about his love at this point was that he knew his duty to his forefathers) He knew that he had a prosperity here to continue. Ever since the vineyard was allotted to his first ancestor, that vineyard had been in his family. It had been transmitted through a long line to him. It has been received and taken by a struggle and it was his duty to transmit it in tact to those who came after him. So he had a duty, for the forefathers - and a duty to those who were going to follow after him.

✓ In the third place, you must remember this had been the sight of Naboth's home.) For generations this had been in the family - he had played here as a boy. He had worked in this vineyard and when life was over - this sons should inherit the vineyard. That was another reason for his love - that he was not for sale. Love for God's law. And that brings me to the next thought.

✓ II. THIS MAN WAS NOT FOR SALE BECAUSE HE HAD LOVE FOR HIS LOVED ONES

Naboth loved those people who lived before him - his father, his mother, his grandparents. And he loved those people that he lived with and he loved those who would follow him. And he wanted his heirs to have this vineyard. Everything about this drama convinces me that Naboth had a wonderful family.

It tells me that he loved them and that he would not rob them of this

beautiful fruitful vineyard. That one day he would pass on to them.

Lev. 25:23 says the land shall not be sold forever. So he was not for sale. He had love for God and he had love for his own loved ones.

✓ III. HE WAS NOT GREEDY NOR COVETOUS

He was not for sale because if he had been a greedy man or a covetous man, then he might have made some kind of a bargain with Ahab. But this he did not do. Ahab said, give me thy vineyard. Now I will have it for a garden - for the ~~lands~~ ^{lands} because it is near my house. And then he goes on to say, I will give you a better vineyard than this one. Or I will give you one that is larger. Or if that doesn't suit you, I will give you two or three times it's worth in money and gold.

We have to remember that Ahab was the owner of vast territory. He lived in a palace of ivory but he was not satisfied. He wanted more and more and more.

Now Naboth was not for sale. And he was not greedy. And of course Ahab felt that his wishes were being insulted and his dignity hurt.

But here is one big bold sign, beware of covetousness. Now Naboth could have used his vineyard for greed. But he was not for sale. He would not sell his soul for silver, or gold, or a trade, or for any earthly thing.

There is the story of a Russian soldier in the war who was dying on the battlefield. He solicited water from an English officer. And when the English officer bent over him to give this dying soldier a cup of cool water - the soldier pointed a pistol at the heart of that English officer and shot him. Yes, the stories of greed and covetousness are countless. But Naboth, regardless of the pressure put on him, was not for sale.

He was a tenant of this land. That this had been given to him and leased to him. And was his lot. And only an extreme necessity was it to be given up and then in the jubilee year it would come back.

He knew that if this vineyard was turned over to Ahab that it was sold to the crown which would never return to his heirs. Not even on the jubilee year. And so he felt that he must obey God rather than man. Now Ahab knew the law, or he should have known it. But greed entered in at this point.

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IV. THE MAN WHO WAS NOT FOR SALE WOULD NOT COMPROMISE WITH THE WHIMS OF WICKEDNESS

One is foolish to give himself to wickedness or these desires of the wicked. The wicked are never satisfied. Ahab was not satisfied even though he owned vast territories.

Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth had spoken to him. He said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my father's. And he layed down upon his bed, turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

But in face of all of this, Naboth refused to compromise.

The liquor dealers, the gamblers, the criminals - and the Lord's Day destroyers are never satisfied.

They will buy our vineyards unless we stand against the wicked sins. Like Naboth we must say "no".

Some years ago a movie was made of the slum conditions on skid row. After the filming of one of the alcoholics used in the film, was offered a \$40,000 movie contract under the condition he sober up. He turned down the offer saying, I don't want \$40,000 - I don't want to make a come back. I just want to stay here in the brewery and be left alone. I've got my little room and I lock myself in with my half gallon of wine, and I go on a bender. Now and then I can eat a can of beef soup. Now and then I bum a day's work to get enough wine. I just want to be left alone with my wine.

Now Naboth was not like this - he did not compromise - and give way to the whims of the wicked. But there are countless thousands today who will do this.

I think really Naboth sort of thought of this earthly inheritance as something of the earnestness of his lot in the Heavenly Canaan above. That in other words he was not going to give up his faith, his position, and his inheritance on this earth and lose his inheritance above.

V. HE WAS A MAN OF HIGH PRINCIPLE

This was another reason why he is was not for sale. The principle of the thing meant more to Naboth than ~~worldly honor~~. It meant more to him than ~~money~~. It meant more than the invitation to the royal ivory palace.

Do you realize that Naboth could have asked a good price for his vineyard. And the covetous Ahab would have paid it.

You know there are people who say, every man has a price. However, let me be said that a man with godly principles is not for sale.

If we had time to go down into the land of Egypt and go back many years we would visit a young man by the name of Joseph, who was a man that was not for sale. I'll not have part in this wicked thing he said. How can I do this against God. When he was tempted.

Or today we might transport our minds to that great capitol city in Babylon and there visit in the king's palace and interview some young men. And one of the young men said, I will not eat the king's meat. I will not drink the king's wine. I am a man who is not for sale. Isn't it marvelous when you find somebody who is not for sale. A person with high principle like Naboth is not for **sale**.

We need to have some high principles in this country and recognize again that God has laws. When America was a colony of England, Charles I proclaimed an edict - that all men should return to sports on Sunday. He required that all the clergymen read the edict from the pulpit. Many of the clergy rebelled.

One minister did read the royal edict of sports from his pulpit. And the congregation sat amazed - and he had a further edict to read that stated remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. He added these further words - brethren, I read to you an edict from your king and a commandment from your God. I leave it to you which of the two you ought to obey.

Now we are not dealing with man-made edicts and Naboth knew that he was dealing with the laws of God. And he was not going to be sold down the river because he had high principles.

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VI. HE WAS FAITHFUL INTO DEATH.

This man was not for sale. He was faithful until death.

V. 13 - We read - then there came two men called children of Belial and sat before him, witnessed against him in the presence of the people, saying that he blasphemed God and the king. When they carried Naboth forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, and he died.

All forms of wickedness and wicked character are portrayed in this drama.

Ahab was wicked and weak. Jezebel was wicked and strong. The elders of Israel, the two witnesses were wicked and were servants of wickedness.

However, Naboth was a man of strength and spiritual character.

We see in him a man dedicated to the Lord. We see in him a man who in the book of Revelation 2:10 says, he is faithful unto death.

Now of course in V. 6 - if he had been willing to do as others we might have kept his life. But he was determined to be faithful, unto death.

This is a sad story. We stand amazed here at the wickedness of the wicked. And the power of Satan in the children of disobedience. Ecc. 3:16. Somehow there is mingled in our tears about this story - that here was a man committed to the way of God, and yet he is put to death.

And the wicked rejoice that they have carried out this wrong thing against this man.

And Ahab takes possession of the vineyard for the murder of Naboth, the elders of Samaria. He feels that he is entitled to it and he comes down to take it over. We see here what sin will do and the trade it made. He sold himself to work with them in wickedness.

He made himself a perfect slave in his own lust. He was a servant of sin and of course he was going to take the wages of it. Rom. 6:23.

Ahab voluntarily sold himself to sin. It was his choice. It was his own act - his own deed, that he submitted to the dominion of sin. And he really had no excuse for his sin. He had no one to blame but himself.

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I hope we are able tonight to make a contrast, that as the local Senate had judged him guilty - they had set him on high and then put him to death, on a false charge. Our text indicates that they informed the king of the manner of Naboth's death. I don't think the king was too much interested in that but they welcomed the tidings and rose up on that very day to go down in his chariot from Samaria - to the place of Jezreel. And when he reached the vineyard - there was that new possession.

But suddenly there stands before him one of the prophets of God. Now he has been startled before by this man of God who predicted a drought. Ahab knew him. And he knew that here was a man of God. Ahab who had killed and taken possession - and acted as though there were no God in Heaven. And here is Elijah - and he looks upon him as a personal enemy. As though he has found him in some wicked sin.

V. 20 - Ahab tries to make this a personal controversy as he directs at Elijah. I have found, not thee, because thou has sold thyself to work evil.

What the prophet had spoken was not the outcome of personal enmity. Nor was it the result of some sudden temptation. It was not a rash moment in the life of the king. It was the whole direction of life which the king had deliberately chosen to follow.

There were two things to note. He sold himself as a slave. Rom. 7:14. He had no longer freedom of action - he was now giving way to the master Satan. Consciously to do evil in the sight of God. We ought to remember.

The second thing to remember is that the words of the heart went straight

to Ahab. He could no longer disguise the truth for himself. He no longer thought about the personal feelings he had for the prophet. Why, it was against Jehovah that he had sinned. And before Jehovah he humbled himself. As a mourner, he rent his clothes ~~and~~ ^{cried} to God, that he had rent his heart. He had a load of grief and a load of sin. But here was the eyes of the living God. Who had watched this criminal act take place, before his very eyes.

And you just can't help recount his story time and time again - and come out with the same answer. How can a sinful man hope to succeed by sin. The scheming Jezebel brought the honest Naboth to his death. The greed for gain. The deeds of darkness. Just like a serpent.

Well, as V. 16 says, he was about to make success and possess the vineyard - and it was nothing to him that Naboth had died. Or that he had been a faithful man of God. But he wanted to get that possession by hook or crook.

What better way is it tonight to describe those of the drink dealers. Those that peddle alcoholic beverages - from the State on down. Their craft and cunning is to bring multitudes to ruin and to death. That they might get the possession of their money. They want to buy their little vineyards.

This is the same thing with the drug dealers and the drug pushers, out in the world. The only thing they are interested in is not the righteousness of the young people or the others. But it is that they might get from them their little vineyard - their money. Their soul - get them hooked.

The forgotten factor (V. 17-18) is that the Lord God had been an eye witness to all of this. The forgotten factor in the schemes of worldly men.

It is that here is God looking on in the secret chamber that has never been built, that would ~~cut out God~~. God is not in their thoughts.

But here was the stern command, go down, meet Ahab, speak to him - you have been a killer and you have taken possession. V. 17-18, he says in this place where the dogs lick the blood of Naboth. Shall dogs lick thy blood, thine alone, even thine. Now this was a terrible message that Elijah got from God Almighty. And God's love is that by no means he is going to permit this kind of thing. And I'll tell you the prophet might have preferred to take some more gracious message to the king. He would have liked to toned it down. And not given such a solemn warning. But the prophet didn't want to be a traitor of God. Be a deceiver of souls. V. 20-27.

And I tell you there was a startling question when Ahab said to Elijah - hast thou found me, oh my enemy. V. 20. The messenger of God found Ahab. The handwriting on the wall - like Belshazzar was a sudden surprise. Right in the inner secret - Luke 12:20. Be sure your sins will find you out.

But why was the prophet of God his enemy. The prophet of God. Well, because he was living with enmity to God. Was Elijah his enemy because told him the truth. Gal. 4:16. If the sinner is not found by the servant of God - he will not be found by God himself.

Old Elijah gave him a straight answer - I have found you. You sold yourself to work evil. The Devil has you - you have sold out. You have been for sale. Like every other sinner.

And then he went on V. 21, 24 - to give him the prospect that the dogs would lick his blood. A dismal outlook for a wealthy royal sinner. With what measure

ye meet - it shall be measured out to you. All the workers of iniquity ought to fear the future and ought to fear judgement.

This tells us that there maybe time when wicked people seem to prosper. And they may seem to prosper for a long time. But the day is going to come when they will be like Felix and they will tremble. Their hearts are unhumble, unchanged, and they hate the faithful prophet. And they will not repent. They will not change their hearts.

Now the wicked shall (not be unpunished) Prov. 11:21. Ahab went down to battle with Jehoshaphat against Syria to recover - against death, he put off his royal robes and went to battle disguised as a private soldier. And there is no disguise which can hide the sinner, from God and his judgement. A random shot arrow - mortally wounded Ahab. The unknown soldier who wounded him was the bowman of God's divine retribution.

Ahaziah, Ahab's son, and Joram met violent death. What about the queen. Eleven years after the death of Ahab, the king, Jehu had her thrown down from her tower in Jezebel - and drove over her body with a chariot. Her blood spattered the horses and the wall. Later Jehu gave instructions that she be buried. But they found that the dogs had left nothing of her, but the skull, the feet, and the palms of her hands. 2 Kings 9:7, 30:37.

I plead with you, do not sell yourself to evil. Do not be a man for sale. Naboth was a man who was not for sale.

Where do you stand?

I read a sad story of a nurse who gave a patient the wrong dose of medicine.