

This solemn story reveals two things of which we need to be reminded constantly, which are always true but which we so quickly forget: first, that God is sovereign, all-powerful and infinitely holy, and that He hates sin (**Romans 1:18**); and second, that man is wicked, willful and deserving of God's wrath (**Colossians 3:5-6**).

1 Kings 21:3: "But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.'"

- Grammatical Usage: "**forbid**" or in Hebrew, "ḥā·li·lāh" meaning, "be far; prevent"; a directive from chalah; literal for a profaned thing: far be it!

"Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him" (Psalm 128:1).

The Bible often tells us that God blesses and rewards obedience. In fact, obedience to God (1) proves our love for Him (**1 John 5:2-3**), (2) demonstrates our faithfulness to Him (**1 John 2:3-6**), (3) glorifies Him in the world (**1 Peter 2:12**), and (4) opens avenues of blessing for us (**John 13:17**).

- Literal Interpretation: But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The Lord prevent this thing as it is far from God's directive that I should give you my inheritance and profane the inheritance of my fathers.'
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word. Five personalities are brought before us in this story, and notice how each of them acted in this terrible drama:

1. AHAB'S SELFISH DEMAND

Vv. 1-2. Ahab, King of Israel, was very wealthy, but all his possessions did not satisfy him and he coveted the vineyard which belonged to Naboth. He offered to exchange or buy it, but to his surprise and anger Naboth refused (**v. 3**). So what did Ahab do? **V. 4:** what a picture it is – a king sulking and acting like a spoiled child! Covetousness is a dreadful sin, yet sometimes even the Lord's people sulk when they cannot have their own way, especially if it is not what God wants! But let us look at:

2. NABOTH'S STEADFAST REFUSAL

When Ahab asked for the vineyard, Naboth said, "**The Lord forbid...**" (**v. 3**). Was this an unreasonable answer? No. The vineyard, part of his inherited property, had belonged to his ancestors for many generations, so how could he sell it? But it was not simply a matter of sentiment but in obedience to **Leviticus 25:23** and **Numbers 36:7**. God had expressly forbidden the sale of this property; therefore, when Ahab made his request Naboth said, "**The Lord forbid it...How can I do this thing when God has forbidden it?**" So he refused to disobey God – and how great this is! Look up and compare **Hebrews 11:24** with **Daniel 3:13-14** and **Acts 4:20**. Christian, are you contemplating marriage with an unbeliever? "**The Lord forbid it**" (**2 Corinthians 6:14**). Are you

seriously thinking of uniting in Christian service with those who do not believe the Bible? **“The Lord forbid it” (2 Corinthians 6:15)**. Naboth had the courage of his convictions. It was a costly business to stand up for God, truth and righteousness – it always is (**v. 13** and compare **Psalm 37:32**). Now notice:

3. JEZEBEL’S SINISTER PLOT

Vv. 5-14. Jezebel is one of the most sinister figures in the Bible. She not only wrought great evil, but she influenced Ahab to do evil. See how she acted when she heard of Naboth’s refusal:

- She replied with a stinging taunt (**v. 7**);
- She resorted to forgery (**v. 8**);
- Her action was filled with hypocrisy (**v. 9**);
- She pressed others into perjury (**v. 10**);
- She perpetrated the horrible act of murder (**v. 13**).

Thus, she did away with Naboth, the righteous, God-fearing man and gained the vineyard for Ahab (**vv. 15-16**). Her sinister plot succeeded, and a humble servant of God was stoned to death. Does this suggest that sinful men and women can defy God and get away with it? No! Read **vv. 16-17**; no sooner had Jezebel completed her wicked scheme than **“the word of the Lord came to Elijah...” (Numbers 32:23)**. Notice, then:

4. GOD’S SOVEREIGN ACTION

Ahab and Jezebel had defied the Lord, but they could not get away with it, for He is sovereign in the affairs of man and He always has the last word. Now He acted – and take note of this solemn record, for this God is the God before whom all men will stand to give account of themselves (**Romans 14:12**). In the world there are two groups of people: those represented by Ahab and Jezebel, and those by Naboth and Elijah, and the latter group are very much in the minority. Many, like Naboth, have been martyred for their faithfulness to the Lord, and many are suffering persecution and death because they are Christians. Is the Devil winning, and is the majority group in the right? No – look up **Matthew 7:13-14** and compare **Proverbs 4:18-19**. God will yet vindicate His people and mete out judgment to those who have rebelled against Him, rejected His word and refused to humble themselves before Him (**Revelation 20:9-15, 21:6-8**). God is merciful and slow to fulfil His word of judgment, but He will fulfil it (**Ecclesiastes 8:11**). Finally, we consider Elijah himself. Notice:

5. ELIJAH’S SOLEMN TASK

Vv. 17-26. It was a hard task for Elijah to have to pronounce Ahab’s doom and that of his posterity, and then the doom of Jezebel (**vv. 21-24**). What should be our message in these darkening days? Should we tell men and women that God is love? Yes. Should we say that He is merciful? Yes. But above all, we must declare that God is just and holy, that He hates sin, that judgment is coming upon this world and that if they want to escape it they must flee from the coming wrath (**Matthew 3:7**) – flee to the refuge which is Christ Jesus our Lord (**Isaiah 32:2**). The message that should be on the lips of every Christian today is **John 3:36** – not the first part without the second.

➤ Conclusion: Am I in obedience to God?