

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

II. The Divided Kingdom, 1 Kings 12:1-22:53

U. Handling Abuse And Abusers God's Way

(1 Kings 21:1-29)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Just like 2 Timothy 3:1-5 predicted, all sorts of abuse is widespread in today's society: (a) 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men will face severe physical violence from an intimate partner sometime in their lifetimes. ("Domestic Violence," safehorizon.org) (b) 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will be sexually abused before age 18, and in the United States, more than 4 children die from child abuse and neglect every day, with over 70 % of them being below the age of 3. ("11 Facts About Child Abuse," dosomething.org) (e) Locally, though Brad Davis of "The Talk of Connecticut" radio show encourages calls, last week he said he is screening out several known callers due to their abusive speech. Brad has also expressed concern about the general rise of intense abuse in our society, and asked, "What's going on?!"

(2) Yet, directives on handling abuse are often lacking: one web site suggests that victims of emotional and verbal abuse set boundaries on behavior for the abusive party and enforce them, but some abusers will angrily react by dangerously enhancing the abuse! Another suggestion is that the victim change his beliefs of the abuse events, but abusers often seek to confuse their victims to control them, so the victims are unable to discern the right beliefs!

Need: *So we ask, "How would God want us to handle emotional, verbal and physical abuse and abusers?!"*

- I. **1 Kings 21:1-16 reports that godly Naboth was verbally, emotionally and physically abused to death:**
 - A. King Ahab desired to have the vineyard next to his winter palace in Jezreel for a vegetable garden, so he asked its owner, Naboth if he might obtain it in exchange for a better vineyard or for money, 1 Kings 21:1-2.
 - B. Naboth refused Ahab's request because the land was his forefathers' inheritance that Scripture forbade him from ever selling to anyone, including king Ahab, 1 Kings 21:3 with Leviticus 25:23 and Numbers 36:7.
 - C. Ahab became despondent over Naboth's refusal, so his wife Jezebel gave written orders in Ahab's name to the leaders of the city to frame Naboth by slander so that he would be executed, 1 Kings 21:4-10.
 - D. The city leaders heeded this order: Naboth was publicly slandered, what involved verbal and emotional abuse, and he was then taken away and stoned to death in physical abuse, 1 Kings 21:11-13. 2 Kings 9:26 claims Naboth's sons were executed with him, what greatly augmented the emotional pain for Naboth and his family.
 - E. When Jezebel heard that Naboth was dead, she told Ahab about it, recommending that he take possession of the late Naboth's vineyard. Ahab thus went out to the vineyard to take possession of it, 1 Kings 21:14-16.
- II. **Though the SHORT-TERM results of this abuse gave Ahab Naboth's vineyard while Naboth and his family suffered great loss, in the LONG-TERM, God eternally reversed the lot of both sides (as follows):**
 - A. The eternal future of Naboth and his family is marked by God's healing and blessing:
 1. When Naboth and his sons lost their lives and property, God took their souls to heaven, cf. Luke 16:22.
 2. There, they were greatly rewarded for suffering persecution for righteousness' sake, cf. Matthew 5:10-12.
 3. In the end, Naboth, his sons and family will be resurrected to live with Christ in His Kingdom where they will again repossess their inherited property, healed of all past suffering, Dan. 12:13 NIV; Rev. 21:1-4.
 - B. The eternal future of Ahab and Jezebel is marked by loss and/or suffering:
 1. God sent the prophet Elijah to meet Ahab in Naboth's vineyard to tell him that he and Jezebel would be slain and their bodies dishonorably treated for what they had done to Naboth, 1 Kings 21:17-24.
 2. Ahab repented at this news, so God waited to fulfill the prophecy until Ahab had died, 1 Kings 21:25-29.
 3. In eternity, unbelieving Jezebel will suffer eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15), and since Ahab partly repented (1 Kings 21:27-29), **IF he does not go to hell as an unbeliever**, he will scarcely be saved and forever lack reward for his lack of godly deeds, cf. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15.
- III. **However, Elijah, who was another victim of abuse by Ahab and Jezebel, still lived with the scars of their abuse, so God equipped and led him to gain spiritual victory in facing Ahab again, 1 Kings 21:17-24:**
 - A. Elijah had faced severe emotional abuse from Ahab and Jezebel: God had once told him to hide for his life from Ahab (1 Kings 17:1-4) and Elijah had then suffered burnout from Jezebel's death threat, 1 Kings 19:1-4.
 - B. However, God renewed and restored Elijah to handle his abusers and their abuse (as follows):
 1. The Lord had physically, emotionally and spiritually revived Elijah from his burnout, what included calling the godly, encouraging Elisha to be Elijah's apprentice and encouraging helper, 1 Kings 19:5-18.

2. God then led Elijah to address Ahab in Naboth's vineyard equipped by God's power, 1 Kings 21:17-24:
 - a. [NOTE: abusive parties are actually *dangerous* people, so 2 Timothy 3:1-5 directs that we **AVOID** them. However, Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 21:17-24 applies to those who like him are **Scripturally required** of God to interact with an abusive party in some way and to some degree!]
 - b. **God** told Elijah to go (**with godly supporter Elisha**) to Ahab in Naboth's vineyard and **tell him "Thus saith the Lord"** in charging Ahab with murder and theft, "**Thus saith the Lord**" **AGAIN** in announcing Ahab's consequent shameful death in divine judgment (1 Kings 21:17-19 KJV) and thus "**spake the Lord**" **AGAIN** in predicting Jezebel's consequent shameful death in divine judgment, 1 Kings 21:23 KJV.
 - c. When Elijah met Ahab, he asked Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" (1 Kings 21:20 ESV) Ahab's question (i) **abusively blamed Elijah** for aggressively seeking him out as would an enemy, and it was meant (ii) **abusively to intimidate Elijah**: calling him the king's enemy made Elijah an outlaw to be slain, revealing that Ahab supported his wife Jezebel's 1 Kings 19:1-2 initial death threat against him!
 - d. However, **Elijah** rightly **focused on God's Word** to **reply** that **Ahab had sold himself to do evil**, the **REAL cause** of the **relationship break** between them, and Elijah **added the Word of God** that **charged** Ahab and Jezebel with **sin** and **predicted** their **consequent punishments**, 1 Kings 21:20b-24.
3. Elijah's message, being **GOD'S WORD**, **powerfully affected** Ahab so that he even partly repented (1 Kings 21:27), so God waited to fulfill Elijah's prophecy fully until after Ahab was dead, 1 Kings 21:28-29.

Lesson: (1) *Though Ahab and Jezebel emotionally, verbally and physically abused Naboth and his sons to death, in eternity, Naboth and his family will be greatly blessed while Ahab and Jezebel will forever lack blessing.* (2) *As Elijah still lived scarred by past abuse from Ahab and Jezebel, he functioned in spiritual victory by (a) relying on God's physical and emotional nurture, (b) associating with godly supporter Elisha, (c) heeding God's will in his life and ministry and (d) relying on God's Word to interact with Ahab from a platform of divine power.*

Application: (1) *May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16.* (2) *If we are ever abused to death for the sake of righteousness and we know Christ as Savior, be sure that God will fully heal and bless us in eternity.* (3) *If we bear scars of abuse in this life, may we (a) rely on the Holy Spirit for nurture (Gal. 5:16, 22-23), (b) fellowship with godly supporters (2 Tim. 2:22), (c) heed God's calling (1 Tim. 4:16) and (d) think, act and speak Scripturally especially if we must face abusers, Heb. 4:12. [(4) NOTE: We should generally avoid abusive people, 2 Tim. 3:1-5. However, if we Biblically MUST interact with them as in Elijah's case, may we follow Elijah's example.]*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Deborah Mendenhall's article, "Walking Without Fear" in the May-June 1997 issue of Christian American, p. 32-35 tells the story of Leisha, a woman who had experienced multiple episodes of various kinds of abuse. When she was 8 years old, her father whom she adored was killed in an industrial accident, and her home life went from secure to chaotic. Leisha's mother was unable to cope with raising four children by herself, so she "deteriorated into schizophrenia." (Ibid., p. 32) The mother chased Leisha with knives and tried to burn down the house. She brought boyfriends home, and they often abused Leisha until she was 12 when she accepted Christ as her Savior, Ibid.

However, Leisha was then assaulted at gunpoint in broad daylight multiple times by a serial rapist, only later to be asked to testify at the man's trial! Since the court needed her testimony to convict him, she testified, and her testimony led to his conviction. After the rapist was convicted for life imprisonment plus 20 years, he escaped from prison and tried to find Leisha, openly vowing to hunt her down if it took the rest of his life, Ibid., p. 35.

He was rearrested after robbing a shoe store while making his way to Leisha's home, so she entered a witness protection program. Leisha got happily married to a committed Christian and became the mother of a son, Ibid.

Her testimony illustrates this sermon, and her words are as follows: "Ultimately, the key to true healing is the Word of God . . . People who have been through trauma have pain that never goes away if they don't fight it with the Word . . . I have to stay in the Word at all times because anything can spark one of those memories and I could go spiraling down very quickly. If anyone has reason to fear, I do. But I feel it would almost be an insult to God to walk in fear. When we hold onto fear, it thwarts the very plan God may have in our lives. It debilitates us from fulfilling His divine purpose. Christians will have tribulation. We will have trouble. The world around us is full of sin, crime and viciousness. We are not given an exemption card from the world when we become Christians. But we are guaranteed that God will be with us no matter what we go through." (Ibid.)

May we trust in Christ to be saved. If we face or have faced abuse, may we rely on the Lord for His power and think, act and speak in alignment with God's Word for healing, strength and direction.