

Becoming God's Humble Hero: When God Says That's Enough
Message for September 2, 2007 ~ Eric Nelson
1 Kings 21

- Illustration: Elijah Lovejoy
- Recap of Ahab & Jezebel...what they have done:
 - Scripture states that the evil that the previous kings did seemed trivial compared to what Ahab did
 - Married Jezebel against Jewish law
 - Worship the Baals and put up Asherah poles
 - Rebuilt Jericho
 - Killed the Lord's prophets
 - Tried to kill Elijah
 - Set up a treaty with a pagan neighboring country and befriended their king instead of killing their leaders as commanded by God
- In all that they have done, God continued to send His prophets to try and turn Ahab away from evil. He has threatened His judgment on Ahab & Jezebel, but has yet to actually carry out the sentence. Is Ahab becoming arrogant, thinking that he may actually be above God? PRIDE & GREED
- 1 KINGS 21:1-3

¹Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. ²Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth." ³But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."
- Naboth sees his vineyard, not just as land, but a gift from God. His respect for God is greater than his fear of Ahab.
- Vs. 4-6

⁴So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. ⁵His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?" ⁶He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

- Ahab, strong powerful Ahab pouts and complains and tells only half the truth. He's not content.
- Jezebel's plan – Vs. 7-15

⁷ Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."
⁸ So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him. ⁹ In those letters she wrote: "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. ¹⁰ But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death." ¹¹ So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. ¹² They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. ¹³ Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. ¹⁴ Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned and is dead." ¹⁵ As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead." ¹⁶ When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.
- That's enough of Ahab's evil. Once again, it's time to bring in Elijah:

¹⁷ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ¹⁸ "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. ¹⁹ Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!' " ²⁰ Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!" "I have found you," he answered, "because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. ²¹ 'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. ²² I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin.' ²³ "And also concerning Jezebel the LORD says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.'
²⁴ "Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country." ²⁵ (There was

never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. ²⁶ He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.)

- Ahab's repentance

²⁷ When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly.

- God's response – forgiveness but consequences. God says, that's enough. His repentance is enough.

²⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ²⁹ "Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

- Epilogue:

- Ahab's repentance is only temporary, though, as he quickly returns to his old evil ways and habits of ignoring God's prophets.
- Ahab is killed in battle three years later and Jezebel later also died a tragic death just as Elijah has prophesized.
- But that's not fair! How can God still show love to someone that evil?
 - Because of sin, we are all equal.

Illustration – "C" Grade

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12)

- God loves all.
- Repent & Believe - That's enough
 - Jesus has done it all for us – once on the cross
 - Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. (Hebrews 7:27)*
 - Forgiveness is for all, not just a few
 - For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1 Peter 3:18)*

- We now have a new life in Christ
Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
- Our response: Forgive as the Lord forgave us.
¹² *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*
¹³ *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:12-14)*
- Illustration: Corrie Ten Boom

Elijah Lovejoy

In the 1830s, the great American hero, editor, school teacher, and Minister Elijah Lovejoy left the pulpit and returned to the press in order to be sure his words reached more people. The Civil War might have been averted and a peaceful emancipation of slaves achieved had there been more like him. After observing one lynching, Lovejoy was committed forever to fighting uncompromisingly the awful sin of slavery. Mob action was brought against him time after time; neither this nor many threats and attempts on his life deterred him. Repeated destruction of his presses did not stop him. "If by compromise is meant that I should cease from my duty, I cannot make it. I fear God more than I fear man. Crush me if you will, but I shall die at my post..." And he did, four days later, at the hands of another mob. Not one of the ruffians was prosecuted or indicted or punished in any way for this murder. (Some of Lovejoy's defenders were prosecuted! One of the mob assassins was later elected mayor of Alton!)

However, note this: One young man was around who was deeply moved by the Lovejoy martyrdom. He had just been elected to the Illinois legislature. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

Paul Simon, "Elijah Lovejoy," Presbyterian Life, 18:13 (November 1, 1965), quoted in K. Mennenger, Whatever Became of Sin, p. 210.

Corrie Ten Boom

It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, a former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there – the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanching face.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. "How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein." He said. "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!" His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him. I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I prayed, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me. And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself.

Corrie Ten Boom – "The Hiding Place"

"C" Grade

Secretary of State under President Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, continued to brood about a scholastic mark he received at Princeton early in

his life. Talking about American education at a Senate Foreign Relations committee hearing, Dulles said:

“When I went to college, I had spent much time with French- speaking families in Europe and could speak better French than my professor. But because I couldn’t conjugate a verb, I got a C. All the rest of my marks were A’s and B’s. I never quite got over the injustice of it.”

What was an injustice to Sec. of State Dulles because he almost made it was perfectly justified by his professor because he didn’t quite make it. The standards were set and were not reached, so the lower grade was given.

God set the standards for us, too, yet none of us can quite reach them. Regardless of how close we think we come to being perfect, none of us can claim perfection and so are equal.