

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Oct. 1

MONDAY

One of the sons of the prophets has a plan to deceive the king of Israel. He needs someone to assist him – actually to beat on him, so that the beating looks genuine. The first man he asks won't help him, but the second one does.

READ: I Kings 20:35-37

There must be a bit more dialog than we find here. Being eaten by a lion seems a tough reward for not pounding on a guy. It's more likely the first man did not want to tempt the wickedness and cruelty of King Hadad. Perhaps he did not wish to identify with a prophet who was taking a stand against an evil and godless king. There was some danger in doing that; after all, despite the recent defeat, he was still the king. Courage to live for God is called for in all generations. We are to trust God and take a stand against that which is ungodly. We are to identify as being on the Lord's side. Always and ever.

TUESDAY

The prophet who was hit, disguised by a bandage, sits by the road until the king of Israel comes riding by on his way home after making a treaty with Syria. The prophet yells out and confesses to being derelict in his duty to guard a prisoner. The Israelite king announces the judgment of death upon him. The prophet whips off his disguise and declares that the very same judgment to be upon the king, for he had made a treaty with the Syrian king instead of killing him as God had demanded.

READ: I Kings 20:38-43

We see here that God takes obedience very seriously. We might not, but God does. For example, when God tells us to honor and respect those in authority over us in government and in the Church, that demand requires obedience. We can rationalize all we want, but obedience is what God looks for. I recall one pastor telling me that his congregation had him for dinner every Sunday! I think he was speaking metaphorically (at least, I hope so) and that he was saying that they pretty much chewed him up and spit him out. I've been chewed on a few times and spit out a few other times. Make sure you are never a part of that sort of behavior. The king of Israel is the bad example here.

WEDNESDAY

The scene switches back to Israel where a guy name Naboth owns a sweet little vineyard next to the palace. King Ahab sees it and wants it, and he offers to buy it. Naboth isn't interested in selling – the land was his father's before him and he's not going to let it trade hands. King Ahab is distraught and like a middle school kid, goes home and sulks over the unfairness of it all.

READ: I Kings 21:1-4

Naboth is to be honored for excellence. He identified the priority which God has over even a king. He chooses to honor the old, traditional teaching the Law rather than be persuaded by the power of a crown. Discerning rightful priorities is an endless pursuit in the lives of all who believe. Show me the good, the better, and the best, and Lord, set my eyes on the greatest of these. Then set my feet on that path – the path of excellence.

THURSDAY

When King Ahab tells his wife, Jezebel, about Naboth refusing to sell him the piece of property he desires, she decides to do what she thinks he should have done: she sends letters to the city officials where Naboth lives and instructs them to kill Naboth.

READ: 1 Kings 21:5-10

Scoundrels play a big part in the wickedness of this world. Here's what the Bible says about scoundrels: (1) don't be one; (2) don't have anything to do with them; and (3) don't be dismayed by the evil they bring with them. God's plans for His people are not un-done by evil men. Their evil will follow after them. But we who love the Lord and walk according to His Word will find Him to be the faithful God who provides for His people, and always gives grace.

FRIDAY

The plan of Jezebel is carried out, and Naboth is killed. Jezebel is notified and she tells Ahab. He stops sulking and goes to take ownership of Naboth's land which has suddenly become the property of the King.

READ: I Kings 21:11-16

Do not think that wickedness in politics and in the legal system are something new. 2700 years ago, there was Jezebel and the legal system of the city where Naboth lived. Quite legally, with the power of the throne behind them, city leaders did as the queen commanded and they killed Naboth. What they surely called an "execution" because it was portrayed as a just and legal punishment for crimes against God and the crown, in reality, was plain and simple, a murder, for the so-called "crimes" were bogus, and the conviction based on the scheme of a wicked queen and the lies of evil men.

SATURDAY

God sends the prophet Elijah to the vineyard of Naboth. He arrives there and finds King Ahab gloating over his ill-gained property. God tells Ahab (through the prophet) that on the very spot where Naboth was murdered, Ahab will die, and dogs will lick up his blood.

READ: I Kings 21:17-19

Next time you are tempted to take things into your own hands and dish out vengeance, remember the story of Naboth. Vengeance belongs to the Lord and He will see to it! That does not mean that we should all be hoping for the axe to fall on the guy who "stole" my parking spot. It does mean that because God is 100% just and perfectly right in all His dealings, he will bring vengeance wherever it is called for. No one, not even a king, gets around that. So we do well to leave vengeance with the Lord.

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