

Avoid Ahab's Self Pity Party

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into the dangers of self-pity and the wickedness of Ahab as portrayed in 1 Kings 16 and 21. It emphasizes the need to avoid self-pity, which is rooted in unbelief and discontentment, and to seek strength from God to overcome it. The cure for self-pity includes being thankful, seeking counsel from the Word of God, and actively fighting against sinful tendencies. The example of Barbara Udarian's response to her husband's death showcases a spirit of thankfulness amidst trials.

Scripture: 1 Kings 16:30, 1 Kings 21:20, Romans 6:2, Luke 22:32, Psalms 48:14, James 4:7, Philippians 2:13

Topics: "Overcoming Self-Pity", "The Dangers of Discontentment"

Description

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Transcript

Go ahead and open your Bibles to 1 Kings 16. We're going to read a few verses, and then we'll look at 1 Kings 21. 1 Kings 16, verses 30 and on, speak about a man, the King of Israel, a man whom you and I do not want to be like.

I hope you don't. I hope after we've looked at him a little, as we read these passages, that the thought of having any similarity to Ahab absolutely is an abhorring thought to you. And that's one of the reasons we have these passages in the Old Testament.

They are written down for our example. Some to imitate and some to run completely in the opposite direction. But 1 Kings 16, 30, and Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him.

What a statement to be spoken about you. Verse 31, and as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. So meaning, the things that Jeroboam did in his idolatry, Ahab made it look like it was just some light thing.

It's pretty small compared to Ahab. So for a light thing for him to walk in those sins, he took for his wife, and young people, it really matters who you marry, he took, he made this decision. Right? You choose a

wife.

He took for his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. And he went and served Baal and worshipped him. This is the king of Israel.

He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

Now go to chapter 21. Leading into chapter 1, in chapter 20, if you notice the last verse, verse 43, and the king of Israel went to his house, vexed and sullen, and came to Samaria. And that leads us into chapter 21 which we're about to read.

But in chapter 20, Ahab was rebuked by a prophet because in verse 34, he told Ben-Hadad, I will let you go on these terms. He wrongly made a covenant of peace with a man who should have been killed. So in verse 42, the prophet tells Ahab, because you've let go out of your hand the man whom I devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life and your people for his people.

Now how did Ahab respond or handle this righteous rebuke? Verse 43 describes his response to this correction. He went to his house vexed and sullen, and came to Samaria. Vexed and sullen.

Bitter and angry, as one translation renders it. Or resentful and angry, disturbed, troubled, thrown into confusion, agitated, unsettled. He left depressed.

He left not getting his way. He left not being served the way he thought he should have been served. He left not liking what was spoken to him.

And that leads us into chapter 21. We're about to read chapter 21. You look at verse 43 and you kind of ask yourself, is this a one-time response in this man's life? How is he going to respond after this? And we're going to find out it was not some one-time response.

This is a constant theme. And again, we see conduct in Ahab that should terrify us. So let's read at least the first 16 verses in chapter 21.

Now Naboth, the Jezreelite, had a vineyard in Jezreel. It was beside the palace of Ahab, the king of Samaria. And after this, Ahab said to Naboth, give me your vineyard.

That I may have it for a vegetable garden. Because, so this is why he wants this man's land, because it's near my house. And I will give you a better vineyard for it.

Or, if it seems good to you, I'll give you its value in money. So this man Ahab sees some land. He wants this land.

He wants to make a vegetable garden. And what's going to happen here? What's Naboth say? Let's read verse 3, But Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my father. And what he's referring to is there are multiple laws that an old covenant Israelite had that forbid the giving away of the land that they had an inheritance of.

So his response is, the Lord's forbidden me to do this. I mean, this is the king of Israel trying to get this guy to go against law. And Ahab, verse 4, how does Ahab respond? Amazingly, the same way he did in the

previous chapter.

Ahab went into his house, vexed and sullen, because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him. For he had said, I will not give you the inheritance of my father's. And he lay down on his bed and he turned away his face and he would eat no food.

And brethren, that verse right there, this isn't talking about his 5-year-old child. It's talking about him. The very king of Israel himself.

He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and he would eat no food. Verse 5, but Jezebel his wife... now this is where it's very important who you're married to. The man is responding horribly.

Is the wife going to help him or hinder him? But Jezebel his wife came to him. You see her husband laying down. He didn't come to dinner.

He's down on his bed, vexed and sullen. Why is your spirit so vexed? Why are you so angry, disturbed, that you do not eat food? And he said to her, because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and I said to him, give me your vineyard for money, or else if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it. And he answered, I will not give you my vineyard.

Now if you notice here, Ahab's not exactly representing Naboth, what Naboth's communicated. He's not getting all the details there. Naboth didn't want to give the vineyard away because it would be something the Lord forbid.

Verse 7, And Jezebel his wife said to him, Do you now govern Israel? You're king, honey. Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be cheerful. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

I will abuse your power as king to get you the very thing that you want. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and she sealed them with his seal. And she sent letters to the elders and to the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city.

And she wrote in the letters, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people, and set two worthless men, and it sounds like that's how she described them. It's in quotes right here. Set two worthless men, which ironically, Ahab is a worthless man.

But here, set two worthless men opposite him and let them bring a charge against him. We need at least two or three witnesses. And saying what? That you've cursed God.

Well, we just saw Naboth does not want to do that, which the Lord forbids, and now he's being accused of cursing God. Then take him out and stone him to death. And the men of the city, the elders, and the leaders who lived in the city did as Jezebel had said.

It's incredible. You've got this giant conspiracy with all these rulers and these worthless men to obey the very thing that this man's wife has written. Verse 12, they proclaimed a fast, they set Naboth at the head of the people, and the two worthless men came in and set opposite him, and the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying Naboth cursed God and the king.

Naboth didn't do that. So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. Then they sent to Jezebel saying, Naboth has been stoned, he is dead.

As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead. And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it. Let's pray.

Father, Lord, this is a terrifying example that we just read. The Lord of a man and his wife who are wicked, corrupt, who provoked You more than any other king. And Lord, here we're wanting to live in a way that honors You, to be righteous and God-fearing.

And I just pray that You'd help me to feed the saints, to give them something from this passage, Lord, that we could do all the opposite of what we see right here. Lord, there's so much missing from this passage because it's not describing a righteous man. And Lord, we want those things to be what describes our lives.

And Lord, You care about us. You're interested in our well-being. You're working in us to will and to work for Your good pleasure.

And so Lord, I pray You'd even use this to warn us. Because warnings are good. Lord, admonishing and warning one another as Paul said.

And so Lord, I just pray for Your help right now in Christ's name. Amen. Now, like a lot of Old Testament narrative where you have just the situation being described and you have these characters being introduced, there's a lot you could pull out of this section of Scripture.

You could hit at it from many different angles here as it describes Ahab. And Ahab has multiple chapters that talk and speak about him. But there's someone that this chapter specifically reminds me of.

Someone that I have talked about to you before. Now, this is not a real person. But let me personify this someone.

There was a friend I had when I was lost. And even as a new believer, I continued to run into him again. He often showed up while I was in the midst of a difficult trial.

He would send me messages that always seemed to make me think about myself and not about Christ. It made me think how bad I had it. He would not make me think about the Lord and His promises.

He'd never leave me to give thanks. None of his messages pointed me in that direction. Did not make me have a thankful heart.

I tried to cut him off. He kept trying to message me. Constantly, he was whispering into my ear to feel sorry for myself.

To feel like I had some unique trial and that my situation was something that no one else had ever gone through before. I had to cut it off. I had to purge this person out of my life.

I haven't spoken to them in a few months that I can remember. He's still alive. We don't talk, at least not now.

I have no plans to ever talk to this person again. He seeks to reach out to me constantly at different points. But I can't communicate with him.

I've got to protect my faith from this person's slanderous lies. Yet too often, people don't view this person as as deadly as he really is. I've spoken to you all about him.

I think it was in 2014. I sought to publicly call him out as an enemy of the believer. I warned you about not associating with him.

But sadly, I've heard over the last seven years of different people who have befriended him. And thus, for a second time, I want to make you all aware of the danger of maintaining a friendship with him. And it appears when brethren go through trials, that's when he messages.

That's when he wants you to be self-focused to get your eyes off of the Lord Jesus Christ. So what's his name? He's here in this passage personifying a specific sin. And some of you are friends with him right now.

Some of you have even hung out with him this week. And if you did, I don't know that you did. I'm not talking about someone I counseled this week.

But it makes me sad to know that people interact with him and give him the time of day and read his messages. It hurts because I want to help you. And I know that he is an enemy of the Christian.

I want you to completely befriend him. And the fact that he associated with Ahab and Ahab was as wicked as he was, it should make you recognize he could lead you to places of darkness that you don't anticipate. This is someone who Cain was friends with.

Elijah, a few chapters earlier, was friends with him. Martha. That's how I talked to you about him seven years ago.

Martha was friends with him. And then here we see Ahab interacted with him. And I'm not talking about Jezebel or the spirit of Jezebel.

I want to speak to you about befriending Mr. Self-Pity. Mr. Self-Pity, whose business model is simply to get you to be discontent, feeling sorry for yourself, to make you think that you are the victim. I mean, look again at Ahab.

Verse 43, the King of Israel went to his house, vexed and sullen, and came to Samaria, disturbed, not liking his circumstances. Very upset at his circumstances. And then what happens after this? He's got his eyes set on a piece of land.

Right? Land. You start to covet it. If you Google property disputes, you're going to find that that is a very common thing that happens.

Now this isn't a property dispute about his property line should have been this far over. But there's one guy, his neighbor's garage was on his property line. They legally wouldn't do anything, so he got a sawzall with a long blade and he sawed the guy's garage in half.

People do crazy stuff like that over land. This man, his wife, to get her husband this little plot of land or whatever size of land it was, probably wasn't little, for what? A vegetable garden. You frame and have a man murdered to get a vegetable garden.

And he didn't get his way. In verse 4, in chapter 21, Ahab went into his house, vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him. And then what did he do at the end of that verse? He laid down on his bed and he turned away his face and he would eat no food.

He is having a classic pity party right there feeling sorry for himself that things did not work out as he had hoped they would work out. And we could look at Ahab and we could say this is absolutely insane that the King of Israel would lay on his bed, turn his face to the wall, and not eat any food. But brethren, if we're honest with ourselves, when have maybe we done that or even manifested a little characteristic of that? Giving in to this way of thinking that by not getting my way, I am a victim, woe is me.

So what is pity? To show pity, what's it mean when you show pity to someone? You're showing what to them? Yeah, compassion, right? And compassion, that means you're being moved because of someone's situation. This is good, right? We should always be showing pity. So what's self-pity? Self-pity is the opposite.

It's you feeling sorry for yourself. It's feeling sorry for your situation. It's very me-focused.

It's to be unhappy and self-absorbed, desiring others' attention because of your troubles. Right? Ahab laying in the bed. Whose attention did it get? His wife's.

He got his wife's attention. She comes to him. What's going on, honey? You're going through a hard time.

Self-pity. Mr. Self-pity wants you to lay down on your bed to not eat food, to be in bitter anger and resentment because you didn't get your way and things are not going as you expected them to be. Isn't that what Ahab says in verse 2? And after this, Ahab said to Naboth, give me.

Give me. Give me. Give me your vineyard.

You know, I'll give you a better one. I'll give you more money. I mean, you know, I'm the king.

Just give it to me. No, Naboth didn't budge. And what does Ahab do? He goes all out in his lust for a piece of property to have a vegetable garden.

And his wife has the man murdered. And Ahab does nothing to stop this. But I personify the sin of self-pity as a person.

But the reality is self-pity is not a person. Self-pity is a sinful response that you and I can have in our own hearts in the midst of a trial and a circumstance, and it is a decision that we determine to make. We're right there on the edge.

Something happens that's very unexpected. All of a sudden, we could give in to all this sorrow about ourselves. We're all of a sudden right there.

We could turn from that and rejoice in the Lord in the midst of a trying circumstances. But you know what? These battles with sin, these battles with our flesh, they're a real war. It can feel like an actual person is there whispering to you, telling you to feel sorry for yourself, telling you to go dig a hole and have a pity party.

When Mrs. Anxiety sends you an email, when Sir Discontentment puts a notice on the door that we're apparently lacking something according to him, these sins are there. Mr. Grumble. Oh, he wants you to

complain about your lot in life.

Or Lady Impatience, she comes along telling us we must respond by getting frustrated with everyone because of their mistreatment of us. To see Ahab respond the way he does, it's shocking. It's shocking.

This is a king. This is not a five-year-old. His neighbor has a vineyard.

He wants the vineyard. He lays in his bed. He doesn't eat food.

He's upset. I mean, just constantly getting upset about how things are going. Isn't that what Martha did? Craig just hit on her a few weeks ago.

She came to Christ, and what did she say to Christ? Do you not care? That's what self-pity says. People don't care about my situation. What did Cain do? After he was dejected over his sacrifice not being received, what did Cain do? He felt sorry for himself.

And what did he do in the midst of feeling all the sorrow that he was not accepted? Was he like Ahab just content to move on? He went and he killed his brother. Wait a minute, whose example did Cain learn from? Well, Cain was Adam's son. He was one of the first humans on this earth.

He had no violent video games to learn how to kill people. He had no whatever. His mind wasn't warped by the news.

He had a deceitfully wicked heart outside of Jesus Christ, and he killed his own brother. What does it say in the book of James? You do not have, so what do you do? You should ask, but you don't have. What does James say? People go and they kill one another.

They murder in order to get. But, in these cases, and this is one, we see people are often tested by those around them. Right? Cain by his brother.

Ahab by the guy with the vineyard right next to his house. Ahab wasn't being tested with the guy that owned something miles away. Martha was being tested by his sister.

It says right there, it was beside his property. It was beside his palace. We get tested by these people.

And there are circumstances, and their circumstances seem to be better than ours. Or something that we covet that they have in the midst of their situation. And we see here, not getting what you want could cause you to fall into self-pity.

Right? You build up some expectation that you're going to obtain something and you do not get it. You could either feel sorrowful or you could rejoice in the Lord in the midst of that circumstance. So, I want to think about this sin of self-pity, which is just merely one aspect of what's going on in Ahab's life.

But you know what's entirely absent from Ahab's life? A lot. But one of the things that's entirely absent is thanksgiving. Why is he not being thankful? I mean, you're king.

You're ruler. Why are we reading about a man coveting another guy's land so he can make a vegetable garden and he has the guy killed? Or his wife has the guy killed and he does nothing to prevent it? Why is that even there to begin with? Well, as we already read, this is a wicked man who's an unbeliever. This guy's not a Christian.

This is an example of the unbelieving heart of a person who is sold under their sin. He has no faith. And without faith, you can't really be thankful.

You've got to have faith, and you can't really be thankful because you don't really believe God's in control of your circumstances. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. Proverbs 4, it says, do not enter the path of the wicked.

Do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it. Do not go on it.

Turn away from it and pass on. That's what Ahab is saying to us. When you read this, think about Proverbs 4.14. Don't enter the path of the wicked.

Don't walk in that way. I need to completely avoid the path of the wicked. This man laying on his bed, having a pity party, turning his face to the wall basically and not eating any food, I need to completely avoid any type of act like that where I go on this selfish tangent in the midst of a hard and difficult trial because look where this man's at in his entirety.

He's in unbelief. If I give in to one small manifestation of unbelief by falling into self-pity, who says I'm not going to increase my unbelief and give in to it in greater ways at other times? I mean, if self-pity is part of a wicked person, if I give in to it, what's that going to do in my life? Now, when we go to 1 Kings 20, which led up to verse 43, and then it goes on in verse 21, it says, "...Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard." It's not necessarily like these things are back-to-back. But what we do see here in verse 43 and we see here in verse 4 is this is a consistent characteristic in this man's life.

He's going from disobedience in one area. He's going from disobeying the Lord by not killing someone who he should have killed who's an enemy of the Lord to having a pity party, and then he's going into coveting, and then he's having another pity party. I mean, his life is just back-to-back-to-back.

What is self-pity rooted in? It's a response that comes out of unbelief. And like I said, there's nothing about this man's faith here. Of course, he's full of unbelief.

We've already read in chapter 16, the guy, he's provoking the Lord to anger. This man is a wicked man. There's no faith.

So there's no way he can conquer the self-pity and sorrow that he feels for himself because of his circumstances. Ahab is discontent with not getting this vegetable garden on the adjacent lot. He planned for it.

He hoped for it. He didn't get it, and he has a pity party. Self-pity is rooted in a prideful attitude towards God and that you think you deserve better.

In Ahab's case, the Lord may be messed up by not giving him enough land. If the Lord really cared for me and I'm the king, why didn't I get that lot there? Why did the Lord not give me that? I deserve that. I'm going to take things into my own hands to obtain that lot.

Why didn't Abba's family get it? Self-pity goes hand-in-hand with unbelief. And unbelief goes hand-in-hand with discontentment. All these things are grouped together.

You read in Mark 4, verse 3, Jesus was asleep on the boat. And upon waking Him, His disciples questioned His care for them. And they said, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? What was

Jesus' response to them? Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Jesus said to them, why? Why are you so afraid? And what did He say after that? Have you still no faith? Unbelief leads them to be afraid.

And their fear leads them to have an idea about the Lord that He doesn't care for them. Unbelief. Unbelief will lead you to a pity party.

Unbelief will lead you to fear. Unbelief will lead you to discontentment. It all comes back to am I really trusting Christ? If I'm trusting that He cares for me, I'm not going to be discontent.

I'm not going to be fearful. I don't have to have a pity party. When Craig dealt with Job, where did Job have a pity party? A month ago when Craig dealt with that.

Where in chapter 1 was Job's pity party? Does anyone remember that verse? What verse was that in? He lost all his children. Lost his finances. Where was Job's pity party? Initially, yeah, it was nowhere.

The man had no pity party. Ahab is having a pity party. Job, a blameless man, no pity party.

Ahab, a wicked man, is having a pity party over what? The loss of his children? Over not getting land to get a vegetable garden. Wow! This is what sin does to you. It's what sin does.

It's devastating. And if you remember my message last week, brethren, you are the interest of Jesus Christ. He's interested in you.

He is. And if He's really interested in you, if you really believe what I taught last week, that Christ, as Paul says, no one is genuinely concerned for their welfare, and then he uses a synonymous term and says the interest of Jesus Christ. If you really believe what Philippians 2 actually says, that you are the interest of Christ, and He's interested in you, why should we ever have a pity party? Why should we ever be anxious? And you know, thanksgiving is coming upon us.

But the reality is, the Christians should be celebrating thanksgiving every, not even every day. The Christians should be celebrating and thanksgiving in every circumstance, according to 1 Thessalonians 5, 16. We are called to be thankful people.

There is nothing of thanksgiving in the life of Ahab because there's nothing of faith in the life of Ahab. And Ahab is a wicked unbeliever. Although he be the king of Israel, the very chosen nation of God, we see this man full of unbelief.

He's not trusting God. He's worshipping Baal of all things. What a contrast, Ahab and Job.

The person in self-pity demands that others relieve them of their misery. They're requiring a change of circumstances rather than having a change of their own heart and being content with the lot that God has given them. I mean, they want something different, right? Those in pity think they deserve better.

Like Jezebel told Ahab, you're the king. I mean, she's encouraging that thinking. His wife is encouraging him in his thinking.

Well, yeah, you're the king. You've got the ability and the power to go and get that land. If you want it, go get it.

Abuse your power. Make that guy disobey the very law of God. So what about you and me? Have any of you had a pity party recently? Have any of you done anything similar to Ahab here? Been vexed and sullen, disturbed and agitated and upset? Have any of you went to your bed and not eaten food, not because you were fasting to the Lord, but because something did not go the way you actually anticipated it? Have you ever hosted a pity party? Have you ever participated in someone else's pity party? That's what Jezebel did.

She was no help. You just sit there feeling sorry for yourself. Maybe you even complained about your circumstances in a strategic way to draw others' attention to you.

Because Ahab could have kept it inside. But he didn't. He didn't keep the pity party inside.

He manifested it outwardly. Have you seen the pity party balloons start to inflate? What do you do? What do you do when some of those balloons are coming up and you're about to celebrate your sorrows and say, woe is me. Why has God put me in this situation? Do you pick out a needle and start popping those with truths about Christ's love for you and believing who He is? Or do you allow all of that to get inflated where your vision is gone of the Lord and His care for you? How do you respond when you have unmet expectations? Do you react? Do I react by tanking into a pool of self-pity? Feeling sorry for myself? You remember the servants who'd worked all day in Matthew 20? What did they think? When everyone was getting paid, what were the servants there thinking? They thought they would receive more.

I mean, there the battle is. They had an expectation. We're going to get more.

He paid the first guy this much. We're going to get more. And then when they didn't get what they had expected and built up in their mind, what did they do? Were they content? No.

No, they grumbled about it. And yet the Lord responded and said to them, I am doing you no wrong. And the Lord would say the same thing to you and me about our circumstances.

I am doing Job no wrong. I am doing you and you and you no wrong. And that implies something.

If Christ says to them, I am doing you no wrong, it implies that they were accusing the Lord of doing them wrong. Why would Jesus say that? He said that because that's the implication. And we, in subtle ways, the times that I've hosted a pity party, and I got a little into it before my wife came in and poked all the balloons and diffused everything and helped me out, I'm implying to the Lord, You've wronged me by entering into that party of sorrow.

I mean, are you always down on yourself? To some it might appear like you have humility. Right? But that's basically a false humility. It's pride.

The person in self-pity, often they want affirmation, but you must not give them wrong affirmation for that will be of no help to them. And if you look at Naboth here, it doesn't say a lot about him, but from what I can tell, it seems he's righteous. Look at that verse 3 again.

But Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers. It says in Numbers 36, The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another. For every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Then later, Ezekiel 46, The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their property. He shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of my people shall be scattered from his property. Ahab is doing the opposite.

He's fulfilling these in a negative way. And even though on the surface, Ahab offered to give Naboth a better vineyard, it's all about his own selfish motivation. I mean, you could offer someone something better, but really have an ulterior motive behind what you're doing.

But the law commanded him not to sell his father's property. And he says right there, The Lord forbid. The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my father.

I mean, it appears we've got a man here of integrity who stood up to a wicked ruler, but despite that, all the elders and all the leaders in Israel, they got together and they saw that this man was killed. We also see here those in self-pity can totally miss the reason behind the other person's actions. When you see Ahab describe it to his wife, what does he say? He says in v. 6, and he answered, I will not give you my vineyard.

To me, it seems interesting that Ahab leaves out anything about Naboth saying the Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my father. Right? I mean, the guy in self-pity, the guy discontent or coveting something and he's not getting it, he tends to not even clearly, rightly see the very reason behind the person's actions. And in the same way, that's how we can view the Lord.

We go to the Lord and say, Lord, why did you do this? And we miss the real reason behind it is ultimately for our good. And that's not going to help Jezebel's counsel to her husband if he doesn't give her all the details. Now, even if he did give her all the details, it's very unlikely she would have given him any good counsel.

It says that she incited him to evil. Often those in self-pity, they don't want the truth. They don't want it.

Even though it says in 21-29, if you look there, it does go on to say, Ahab, he lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? It's like, wow, did Ahab really repent here? Did he really have great humility here? Because he humbled Me, I will not bring disaster in his days, but in the sun's days, I will bring the disaster. Well, I think all that's happening there, if you continue to read on, all that's happening to Ahab there is an external action.

That's something that's superficial. Just like constantly in the Old Testament, the sign of a repentant heart, more so was this external sackcloth and ashes, than it was talking about what was internally going on in the individual. Ahab doesn't want the truth.

Unless he gets put in a corner and he wants to get out of judgment. Think of this, do you have a pity party when you're left out of being invited somewhere? Isn't that a classic test? You hope to get invited somewhere. You hear about other people being invited somewhere and you didn't get invited.

You could fall into a pity party. Can you think of where that happens in the Bible? Luke 15. The prodigal son, the one who did not run away.

It says he was angry and refused to go into the celebration for his brother who had returned. He was invited, but he was angry. He was upset that he was left out.

That there hadn't been this for me. He said, you never gave me a young goat. You've wronged me, Father.

And he's having a pity party. You go through the Bible, you find all these people having pity about their circumstances. And their pity is rooted in the fact that they don't really believe that God cares.

Just as the prodigal son is not believing that his earthly father cares, that's what we're doing when we have a pity party to the living God. We're communicating to the living God that we don't really believe that He cares. If we see it for as wicked as it is, I think we'll find far more victory.

Self-pity. Believing you've been treated wrongly and then seeking to punish others by making them feel guilty for something they should not feel guilty about. So what's the cure? We've kind of looked at the negative.

We see this man here I believe is a lost man. And he's just sullen and vexed. He's disturbed.

He's troubled. He's laying down on his bed. He's turning his face and he's eating no food.

And you could say, where's the cure in the chapter? Is it the threats of judgment? And then he humbles himself? Is that what we ultimately need to do is go lay in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what has to happen? You go to the very next chapter, look at v. 8. Or not v. 8. You go down to v. 13. You find Micaiah prophesying against Ahab. And you find Ahab being killed in battle.

And you find ultimately this man drawing the bow at random. And you find that the very prophecies that the Lord said about Ahab's death, they happen. We should fear the judgment of God that this man suffered because of his wickedness.

But what is the cure? Who speaks to your life when you're in a bad way? That's one of the first questions you should ask. That's what we see here. Who spoke into this man's life? A wife who was more wicked than him, it seems.

She's the one who did the plan. She's the one who wrote it in her own husband's name. Who speaks into your life? Who counsels you when you're struggling? Is it your wife? Is it someone in the church? If it's someone in the church, do they counsel you from the Word of God? 1 Kings 21-25 says his wife Jezebel incited him.

Incited him. You know what you and I want to do? Ignore worldly counselors who don't go to the Word of God, who don't give you truth. And what a blessing it is to have a spouse who does not want to join you in your pity party, but rebukes you for inviting her to the party.

That's what you want. Your spouse can be one of the greatest benefits from you to keep you from giving in to the self-pity. They can give that proverbial slap on the face.

Not a literal slap, but a slap on the face to wake you up, to knock you out of it. Naboth got murdered based on a lie because the selfish king wanted a vegetable garden. It's just shocking.

Another thing, what's the cure? What's the cure for self-pity? Well, we need to have in contrast what Elijah had. If you look at 1 Kings 19, this is where commonly people would refer to Elijah falling into self-pity. You just had this major victory in chapter 18.

And then in verse 4, chapter 19, he himself went on a day's journey into the wilderness and came down and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die. Saying it's enough.

Oh Lord, take my life away. I'm no better than my father's. And he lay down and slept under a broom tree.

It could sound like this man of God. Maybe he's doing a similar response. Is that where he stayed? No, look at verse 8. The angel of the Lord came.

He arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the Mount of God. You know what you and I need to not fall into self-pity, to not fall into discontentment, to not fall into coveting? You know what we need? We need the strength of Almighty God in our life. That's the only way.

We need to go in the strength of the Lord. The Lord provides physical provision for Elijah and in the same way, the Lord will provide spiritual strength for you and me to handle our trials correctly. And think of this, believer.

What was Naboth's response? The Lord forbid that I should sell this. What passage of Scripture does that remind you of? Romans 6. Do we continue in sin that grace may abound? What's Paul say? God forbid. God forbid that we continue in sin that grace may abound.

And the reason we can't continue in sin, Paul says, is because we're new in Christ. I mean, we have the power. The strength is there for us.

Well, another thing to help you overcome self-pity. Some of you know, Pastor John Piper publicly acknowledged his own struggle with self-pity. It's one of his big besetting sins in his life.

And this is something he shared. He said this, what the Bible showed me was that there was a disconnect between Christ's cancellation of my sins on the cross, which is justification, and my conscious willed opposition and conquering of my own sins through a blood-bought, Spirit-empowered effort. There was a disconnect.

In other words, God blasted a pattern in his mind of passivity that had developed in me towards a particular cluster of sins. He forced into my face the biblical reality that canceled sins, meaning you and I being legally justified before God based on the righteousness of Christ, must be killed consciously with effort by faith in the Spirit and not coddled. Then he goes on to say this, passivity in the pursuit of holiness is not what the Bible teaches.

I knew that in relation to sexual sin, I knew what to do. Kill it. But I was playing like it didn't exist in relationship to self-pity and those temptations.

In case that quote was confusing, this is Piper's point, right? When a thought of lust would come into his mind, he would consciously seek to mortify and kill that thought. But he wouldn't respond in the same way when a thought of self-pity came into his mind. And so here in his 60s, when he took that year off, that was something God showed him.

He was passive towards trying to kill a respectable sin like self-pity and not seeing it for as wicked as it was. I think if we really look at our own hearts, there are certain sins in your life and my life, self-pity and discontentment and anxiety that we might be treating in a similar way. We take lust and these other things

far more serious than we should these sins.

I've got a kid trying to break in over there it sounds like. Brethren, we need to be gazing on Christ. Did Christ ever have a pity party? He suffered so severely.

He had dear friends of His say, I will never fall away from you, and they did that very thing. I will never deny you, and they did that very thing. And all His disciples left Him and fled.

He was abandoned, even forsaken by His Father. Did He have a pity party? No. Instead, in Luke 22, we hear that Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail.

I mean, who are we to have self-pity? When Christ bore our sorrows, suffered our wrath that we deserve, we could have the greatest sorrow in eternal hell and that's been saved from us. I mean, whatever momentary sorrow we have in this life that might make us feel sorry for ourselves, it's so insignificant compared to what Christ has bore on the cross. I mean, I would say if we should have any pity party at all, it should be a righteous pity of ourselves for lacking love for Christ for what He has done for us.

And you know what? If you really see the pity that Christ has for you and His compassion, it should rescue you from wanting to have a pity party. How could I go and sit and feel sorrowful about myself when Christ has done that which is impossible? Well, at least I thought it was impossible. He's paid for my sin.

Think of this. Any time you spend in self-pity, you've just lost time that you're never going to get back. You're never going to redeem that time.

It's gone forever. It says of Ahab in chapter 21, verse 20, listen to what it says there of Ahab. It says, Ahab sold yourself to do what is evil.

Evil. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord. I mean, Ahab was a man who was selling himself to do evil.

What are you and I selling ourselves to do? Paul the apostle said, I was bought with a price, therefore I'm going to glorify God in my body. And you know what? As you wallow in self-pity, your problems will only get worse. It's not a solution.

And if you don't know Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is the very one who's willing to show you pity in the area you most need it. Your sins. And He's willing to come and to touch your eyes of spiritual blindness and heal you and give you sight.

And because that's happened to us believers, we should be those who are such a people of thanksgiving to the living God for what He has done for us, that we should be so thankful that self-pity becomes something that is a thing of the past. It's just absent in our lives because of the thanksgiving that we have for Christ for what He has done for us. And so my plea for you, brother or sister, don't communicate with Mr. Self-Pity.

Don't give him any time of day. Don't have a pity party. Don't inflate any balloons for that.

Don't head in that direction. You want to be married to Mrs. Thanksgiving. You want to be around her all of the time and just being thankful and full of gratitude for all that God has done.

And I know in closing here, I shared this seven years ago, but it's always just such an impactful testimony. Over 60 years ago, missionary Barbara Udarian's husband Roger was martyred at 31 years of age, along with Jim Elliott and three others. And she wrote after her husband died, she said, tonight the captain told us of his finding four bodies in the river.

One had a t-shirt and blue jeans. Roger was the only one who wore them. I mean, she realized my husband's dead.

God gave me this verse two days ago. Psalm 48, verse 14, For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death.

As I came face to face with the news of Roger's death, my heart filled with praise. He was worthy of his home going. Help me, Lord, to be both mummy and daddy.

I wrote a letter to the mission family trying to explain the peace that I have. I want to be free of self-pity. It is a tool of Satan to rot away a life.

I am sure that this is the perfect will of God. Many will say, why did Roger get mixed up in this when his real work was with the Javaros? And her answer was, because Roger came to do the will of Him that sent him. The Lord has closed our hearts to grief and hysteria and filled them with His perfect peace.

Can you notice what kept her from self-pity? I am sure this is the perfect will of God. When you and I believe that, when you really believe Christ is interested in you, believer, in your circumstances more than you are interested in your own circumstances, when you really believe that, you won't feel sorry for yourself when something goes as you didn't expect it. And you won't just be neutral.

Well, I didn't go get depressed. But you'll positively be thankful. Well, Father, Lord, we need You.

Lord, I am thankful You're our God. There's so many areas we could feel sorry for ourselves. I could feel sorry for myself for not preaching as I had hoped or in a way I had hoped or lacking clarity.

Lord, there's so many things that float around in our mind that get whispered to us, but Lord, we're one to be thankful. Lord, we're not wanting to feel sorry for ourselves, I pray. Father, Lord, whatever brother or sisters are here who are in the midst of self-pity, Lord, would You rescue them? Lord, would You give them a thankful heart? Lord, we don't want to imitate a wicked man who was sold to do evil.

And one of those evil acts was laying on his bed not eating food, feeling sorry for himself. Lord, a murderer with that type of attitude. Lord, that's scary.

Father, we don't want to give sin an inch. Lord, we don't want to give sin a foot. Lord, we don't want to.

And Lord, we need You. Lord, we thank You. Father, You're so good to us.

Lord, You have been preserving different brethren. Lord, You have given us Your grace every day. Lord, You've been saving children in our midst.

Lord, You've sustained people through trials. Lord, we are thankful, Father. You are so good.

You've given us Your Son. Lord, what more could we ask? Lord, when it's all been said and done, everything's going to burn up. But the fact that we have Your Son, Father, thank You for sending the Lord

Jesus Christ.

Lord, we are unworthy servants. Lord, forgive us for the ways that we have failed. We've lacked joy.

And Lord, we pray that You'd be merciful to even save people like Ahab's and Jezebel's who are out in this world right now full of wicked and corrupt hearts just plotting to do evil. Lord, save, please. We pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/4fdGKNdiqwE.mp4>

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