

SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

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Text: 1 Kings 21:1-16

■ Joseph Stowell tells of a conversation he had with a pastor in the former Soviet Union.

"Stalin's reign was the worst time," said the pastor. "I had two KGB agents come to me and say, 'We'll take care of you. You stay the pastor of that church, but once a week give us a report on every one of these Christians. Work for us.'

"I can't do that to God, and I can't do that to this flock," he replied.

So they sent him to a prison camp in Siberia. He endured the forced labor and the cold for ten years. But he did find other Christians in the camp, and God used these believers to fulfill his purposes.

"I was a carpenter building towns for Stalin," said the pastor. "We'd go out in sixty-mile radiuses, and there we would fellowship together. Today there are hundreds of churches in Siberia as a result of these small prisoner fellowship groups."

When men refuse to compromise, they may lose much, but through them God will fulfill his higher eternal purpose.

-- Joseph Stowell, president of Moody Bible Institute. Men of Integrity, Vol. 1, no. 1.

What is your answer when the enemy asks, "Is your spiritual integrity for sale?" Naboth's answer was, "It's not for sale!" As we look at this story note Naboth's *reasons* for holding onto his inheritance.

I. HE WOULDN'T SELL HIS INHERITANCE BECAUSE IT WOULD DISPLEASE GOD.

A. Spiritual integrity begins with a desire to please God.

Do you remember the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob who was sold into slavery? He is an example of someone else who knew what it was to hold onto his integrity because of his love for God.

■ Genesis 39:9, "No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

The prophet Samuel knew what it was to ignore his personal feelings when Israel sinned against God, and stay faithful to God.

■ 1 Samuel 12:23, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.

B. By refusing to give up that which he had built life on he was able to hold onto his integrity.

I realize that some would point to the high price that Naboth paid and question his wisdom. But that is the very thing that should trouble us—the fact that there is a price that some think too high.

II. HE WOULDN'T SELL BECAUSE IT WAS HIS INHERITANCE FROM HIS FATHER.

A. Some, for the satisfaction of their flesh, have sold their spiritual integrity to the enemy.

■ Hebrews 12:16, “See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.”

B. But others are determined to hold onto their eternal inheritance.

■ Ephesians 1:18 “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...”

■ Hebrews 9:15, “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”

III. HE WOULDN'T SELL HIS INHERITANCE BECAUSE MONEY COULDN'T BUT IT.

■ *1 Kings 21:2, Ahab 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."*

A. All that we have in Christ is priceless because of the price paid.

■ 1 Peter 1:18-19 tells us, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you

from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

B. The promise of something better doesn't make it easier to sleep at night.

IV. HE WOULDN'T SELL HIS INHERITANCE BECAUSE NOTHING COULD RELPACE IT.

A. When will man understand that the world offers nothing that can compare?

■ Matthew 16:26, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

B. That which is temporal and corruptible cannot replace that which is eternal and intangible.

CONCLUSION

Throughout his administration, Abraham Lincoln was a president under fire, especially during the scarring years of the Civil War. And though he knew he would make errors of office, he resolved never to compromise his integrity. So strong was this resolve that he once said, "I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me."

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