

MIDWEEK EVENT

This week's main point is: Salvation in Jesus restores us to God, but it sets us apart from the world.

SCRIPTURE | 1 Kings 21:1-16,27-29; John 3:14-21; 16:33; 1 John 1:9

THEOLOGY CONNECTION | REPENTANCE

Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Every word Jesus spoke pointed to the truth. Only through accepting Jesus's words as truth can we experience a restored relationship with God the Father.

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1 KINGS 21:27-29; JOHN 3:14-21; 1 JOHN 1:9

REAL REPENTANCE LEADS TO RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

While we can't know for certain where King Ahab's heart truly was at the end of 1 Kings 21, we saw in our main session that he mourned over his sin. Scripture says he "put sackcloth over his body, and fasted. He lay down in sackcloth and walked around subdued" (1 Kings 21:27). Sackcloth was a garment fashioned out of rough materials like goat or camel hair, and it was associated with humility, grief, and mourning.¹ And God chose not to punish Ahab the way He'd planned. It would be impossible for us to tell if Ahab's repentance was real, but some scholars point out that real repentance also means restoration, and we see no evidence that Ahab made moves to restore what he'd taken from Naboth's family.² Looking at this picture and considering our sin might make life seem a little bleak. How are we to be restored? We have nothing to offer God as repayment, after all. Even if we thought we did, nothing could possibly amount to "enough" to repay our rebellion against Him. But just like He showed with His response to Ahab, God is gracious and merciful. He knows what we're capable of—and what we aren't. He knew we would never be able to restore our relationship with Him on our own, so He sent His own Son to make a way for us through His perfect life and death for our sin. Real repentance means turning to Jesus, giving ourselves over to Him completely, and trusting that His work on the cross and in our hearts is enough to save us—because it is.

- › **HOW DOES IT FEEL WHEN SOMEONE HURTS US AND SAYS SORRY BUT DOESN'T CHANGE HIS OR HER BEHAVIOR MOVING FORWARD?**
- › **WHEN HAVE YOU SAID YOU'RE SORRY FOR SOMETHING BUT NOT CHANGED YOUR BEHAVIOR?**
- › **HOW IS KING AHAB'S STORY BOTH AN ENCOURAGEMENT AND A WARNING FOR US?**
- › **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS GOD IS CALLING YOU TO REAL REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION WITH HIM OR OTHERS TODAY?**

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2 1 KINGS 21:1-16; JOHN 16:33

FOLLOWING JESUS MAKES US LOOK DIFFERENT.

Now, we'll backtrack a bit and look at what King Ahab did that eventually led to his sackcloth and mourning. He looked next door and saw this amazing vineyard that belonged to an Israelite, who knew his land was a gift from God. When King Ahab demanded the land for his own garden, even offering a new vineyard to Naboth elsewhere, Naboth refused. And Ahab sulked and complained to his wife, and Jezebel had Naboth killed so her husband could have the land he wanted. While this might not seem like an outright persecution of God's people, the ESV phrases Naboth's response this way: "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers" (v. 3). Naboth knew the promises that stretched all the way from Abraham to him. Even when going along with the king would've been easier or safer, Naboth followed God and His word. Naboth didn't do what many of us would expect, and he certainly didn't do what Ahab expected; in the end, he died for it. Depending on where you live and who you know, you may never face this kind of fallout from following Jesus and sticking to His commands. But Jesus promised when we follow Him, we will suffer (John 16:33), often because of our faith and the way it sets us apart. He even said the world might "hate" us because we live set apart (John 15:18-19). Following Jesus makes us stand out because He calls us to a different way of life. Jesus didn't issue this warning to scare us but to make us aware and help us prepare to face persecution for living life His way, no matter what form that persecution takes. May we, like Naboth, stand strong in our faith when persecution comes.

- › **WHAT DO YOU TYPICALLY THINK OF WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD "PERSECUTION"?**
- › **NAME SOME TYPES OF EVERYDAY PERSECUTION OR STRUGGLE WE MIGHT FACE WHEN WE FOLLOW JESUS. (FOR EXAMPLE, LOSS OF STATUS OR RELATIONSHIP.)**
- › **WHEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE WORLD "HATING" YOU BECAUSE YOU LOOKED DIFFERENT AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS?**
- › **YOUR INHERITANCE IS JESUS AND HEAVEN. THOUGH YOU CAN'T LOSE YOUR SALVATION, WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU SEE CHRISTIANS "GIVING IN" WHEN THEY FEEL THREATENED BECAUSE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS?**
- › **HOW HAVE YOU BEEN TEMPTED TO "GIVE IN" WHEN YOU'VE FELT THREATENED BECAUSE OF YOUR FAITH? WHAT STOPPED YOU? OR WHAT CONVICTED YOU LATER IF YOU DID GIVE IN?**

WRAP UP

Allow students to pair up. Give each student an index card and a writing utensil. Tell them to come up with three suffering survival tips. In other words, they should think of ways they can remain rooted in their faith even when it's tough. Invite each pair to share their tips, and allow students time to write down the tips that resonate with them most. Instruct them to put their index cards where they'll see them often as a reminder to stand strong in their faith, no matter what.

Sources

1. Chad Brand et al., eds., "Sackcloth," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1428.
2. Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 175.