

My Favorite Thing About EZEKIEL

Ezekiel 3:11

July 17, 2021

Ezekiel was:

- A priest and a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel.
- A part of the 2nd deportation in **597 BC**

Ezekiel was in exile when God called him to ministry. But what was the point? There had been 2 deportations already and much of Judah lay in ruins. What more could there possibly be to say?

God was **STILL** trying to get the attention of the nation of Judah before it was too late – before Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

Why?

Because He loved them. They were His people. He would spare them the ultimate consequence if at all possible.

AND

Despite experiencing siege and deportations, the people still persisted in rebellion and did not believe the consequences of their sin was going to be as severe or last as long as Jeremiah said it would **{70 years – Jeremiah 25:11-12}** because they were listening to the *“pleasant preaching”* coming from *“Prophets of God”* claiming that Nebuchadnezzar would be overthrown and the exile would be over within 2 years **{see Jeremiah 28:1-17}**.

One day, Ezekiel was minding his own business, when suddenly the heavens opened, and he saw the most amazing sight – Strange creatures.... Wheels within wheels covered with eyes moving in all directions.... A Figure that looked like a man **{Jesus}** who glowed and was surrounded by a bright rainbow of light **{Ezekiel 1}**.

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About EZEKIEL** – He was called to be a **Watchman** for the house of Judah. Blowing the trumpet of warning to a people who did not want to listen.

- **Ezekiel 2:1-3:21** This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.... “Stand up, son of man, I want to talk to you”.

“I am sending you to Israel – that rebellious nation. They have rebelled against me, they and their fathers before them. They are obstinate and stubborn, but I want you to say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says’. Whether they listen or not {they are very rebellious}, they will know that a prophet has spoken to them. Don’t be afraid of them or what they say even if they completely surround you. You must speak to them the words I give you – whether they listen or not – they are very rebellious”.

.... “I am not sending you to a foreign country whose language you don’t understand --- I am sending you to your own people. They won’t listen to you because they don’t listen to me. They are stubborn and obstinate. Listen carefully and take to heart everything I am going to tell you then go to the exiles and speak to them --- whether they listen or not”

.... “Son of man, I have made you a **watchman** for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ¹⁸ When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. ¹⁹ But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself. ²⁰ “Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. ²¹ But if you do warn the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself.” **{The command is repeated in Ch. 33:1-9}**

It was the watchman’s duty to alert the city of impending danger – foreign armies, bandits, fire, etc. The watchman would patrol the city wall 24/7 and must remain alert to any threat. He would then sound the call to action.

- **2 Samuel 13:34** - Meanwhile, Absalom had fled. Now the man standing watch looked up and saw many people on the road west of him, coming down the side of the hill. The watchman went and told the king, “I see men in the direction of Horonaim, on the side of the hill.”

- **Joel 2:1** - Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand--

The watchman was accountable to the king should he fail to raise the alarm, i.e., sleeping on duty or down-playing a potential threat. He was responsible for the lives of those living within the walls and the job was to be taken seriously.

Remember the Tubbs Fire?

- **October 8, 2017** ---- The Tubbs Fire started around 9:43 pm.

Sonoma County emergency dispatchers sent fire crews to at least 10 reports of downed power lines and exploding transformers.

Pushed by strong winds from the northeast, the front of the fire moved more than twelve miles in its first three hours. In about three hours, the fire reached Santa Rosa, causing a chaotic scramble among authorities and unprepared residents.

One resident said that by the time the first emergency alert came, the flames were already marching toward his house, leaving just minutes to escape.

Sonoma County officials could have sent out an emergency alert to every cellphone in the region on Sunday night as the fire grew, but chose not to, saying such a widespread alarm would have hampered emergency efforts..... 24 people died.

The watchman was not asked to take on the situation by himself nor was he accountable for the how the people responded. His job was to sound the alarm.

- **Jeremiah 6:16-17** - This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.' ¹⁷ I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But you said, 'We will not listen.'
- **Ezekiel 33:4-5** - Whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.

Being a watchman is a vital job with lots of responsibility. On one hand people appreciate the idea of someone who will stand guard and sound the alarm should any potential danger arise and the watchman will be the first to be blamed for any destruction or loss of life should he fail to sound the alarm.

HOWEVER, people also resent the watchman because of potential interference. Nobody likes the guy who says, *"Probably not a good idea to hold that lit firecracker!"* He's seen as a party pooper, a nay-sayer, a stick in the mud. Nobody likes the person who interferes with fun!!!

Yet, this is exactly what Ezekiel was called to do. Inform God's people, **YET AGAIN**, of the quickly approaching consequences of their persistent and unrestrained rebellion. The *"Prophets"* who were blowing sunshine up their skirts, were lying to them. Jerusalem and the Temple **WOULD BE** destroyed – not one stone would be left upon another. The people – the chosen of God – the ones who claimed **IN WORD** to be His – **WOULD BE** removed from the land - and most of them would never see their homeland again

God had sent prophet after prophet to warn His people **{not in order}**:

Obadiah
Joel
Jonah
Amos
Hosea
Isaiah
Micah
Nahum
Zephaniah
Habakkuk

And as we noted last week, Jeremiah spent 40 years warning them only to be threatened with death, beaten, thrown into prison and thrown down a well for his efforts.

At no point could God's people claim to be in ignorance of their forewarned destruction. Not a single person could say, *"I didn't know – no body warned me!! I would have changed if I had only known!!"* They had been warned, but they were too busy resenting the prophet's interference.

God knows His last-ditch efforts are not going to work. He knows they're not going to listen. He knows they prefer the **Cheap Grace** of forgiveness without transformation over the **Costly Grace** of obedience, but He was going to try anyway:

- “I am sending you to Israel – that rebellious nation. They have rebelled against me, they and their fathers before them. They are obstinate and stubborn, but I want you to say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says’. Whether they listen or not {they are very rebellious}, they will know that a prophet has spoken to them. Don’t be afraid of them or what they say even if they completely surround you. You must speak to them the words I give you – whether they listen or not – they are very rebellious”.

What’s important to note is that God was not going to hold Ezekiel responsible for how the people respond, but for not speaking the truth if it was the truth that needed to be spoken:

- “Son of man, I have made you a **watchman** for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ¹⁸ When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and **I will hold you accountable for his blood.** ¹⁹ But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself..... {This warning applies to the righteous man who abandons his righteousness in pursuit of evil}.

I remember reading, with a rock in the pit of my stomach, the account **Ellen White** wrote in her *“Life Sketches”* regarding a vision she had at a time when she was hesitating to preach the plain warnings of God:

- **Ellen White {1T 73-74}** - It was a great cross for me to relate to the erring what had been shown me concerning them. It caused me great distress to see others troubled or grieved. And when obliged to declare the messages, I would often soften them down, and make them appear as favorable for the individual as I could, and then would go by myself and weep in agony of spirit. I looked upon those who had only their own souls to care for, and thought if I were in their condition, I would not murmur. It was hard to relate the plain, cutting testimonies given me of God. I anxiously watched the result, and if the persons reprov'd rose up against the reproof, and afterward opposed the truth, these queries would arise in my mind: Did I deliver the message just as I should? Could there not have been some way to save them? And then such distress pressed upon my soul that I often felt that death would be a welcome messenger, and the grave a sweet resting place.

I did not realize the danger and sin of such a course, until in vision I was taken into the presence of Jesus. He looked upon me with a frown, and turned His face from me. It is not possible to describe the terror and agony I then felt. I fell upon my face before Him, but had no power to utter a word. Oh, how I longed to be covered and hid from that dreadful frown! Then could I realize, in some degree, what the feelings of the lost will be when they cry: “Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Presently an angel bade me rise, and the sight that met my eyes can hardly be described. Before me was a company whose hair and garments were torn, and whose countenances were the very picture of despair and horror. They came close to me, and rubbed their garments upon mine. As I looked at my garments, I saw that they were stained with blood. Again, I fell like one dead at the feet of my accompanying angel. I could not plead one excuse, and longed to be away from that holy place. The angel raised me to my feet, and said: “This is not your case now, but this scene has passed before you to let you know what your situation must be if you neglect to declare to others what the Lord has revealed to you. But if you are faithful to the end, you shall eat of the tree of life, and shall drink of the river of the water of life. You will have to suffer much, but the grace of God is sufficient.” I then felt willing to do all that the Lord might require me to do, that I might have His approbation, and not feel His dreadful frown.

This vision had a tremendous impact on me and has stayed with me all my professional career.

The job of Watchman for God’s people – **NOT** for the outside world in general – is not an easy one.

Christians spend far too much time holding people, who do not claim to be followers of Jesus, accountable to Christian standards and not nearly enough time holding fellow Christians accountable to those standards **{Please read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13}**.

It is a heavy responsibility to tell people who claim to be Jesus Followers that their choices have eternal consequences. No one likes to be on the receiving end of ridicule and disdain. No one likes to be singled out as a *“party pooper”* or be accused of being *“judgmental”* or a *“legalist”*, from other’s sitting in the pew, for standing for the truth of Scripture, but that is exactly what a watchman is called to do.

We are not responsible for the level of our success or for how people respond. Our responsibility is to be faithful to God, faithful to the preaching of His Word and faithful to the calling we have received – whatever form that calling takes.

That’s why Ezekiel’s call to be a **Watchman** is **My Favorite Thing About EZEKIEL**. His message was unwelcome and not what the people wanted to hear, yet he was utterly committed to giving it. And so should we be.

- **Ezekiel 33:10-11** - Son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?" As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?