

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO WARN AND TO LISTEN

TEXT: EZEKIEL 3:17-19; 33:7-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. The prophet Ezekiel's name means "God will strengthen." He was the son of a priest, and he himself was a priest (Ezek. 1:3). However, he never served in that office because he was taken away captive to Babylon during the reign of King Jehoiachin.
2. This would be during the second deportation, in 597 BC.
3. During the early years of the captivity the false prophets from Israel and Judah kept saying that the people were going to return to Jerusalem and that the city would not be destroyed.
4. However, Jeremiah had sent a message to Babylon saying that the city would indeed be destroyed.
5. Ezekiel confirmed his message and warned the people that first they must turn to God before they could return to Jerusalem.
6. There are many applications in the book of Ezekiel for us. This morning, I want to deal with his warnings in chapters 3 and 33.
7. Note the word "watchman" (3:17). The watchmen on the walls were important to the safety of the city. Isaiah 62:6 says, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence."
8. In like manner, the preacher's job is to sound the alarm and to protect the flock, but very few preachers are doing this today.
9. The prophet Isaiah said, "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant" (Isaiah 56:10-12).

I. WE ARE TO WARN SINNERS (3:17-19; 33:7-11)

1. "We cannot win them all, but we can warn them all" (3:17-21). The apostle Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save

some” (I Cor. 9:22). “Save some.” We cannot save them all, but thank God, we can save some.”

2. Colossians 1:28 says, “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”
3. James 5:20 says, “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”
4. The Bible says that if we do not warn sinners to turn from their wicked ways, then their blood will be required at our hands (Ezek. 3:17-19).
5. Throughout the Word of God, we are reminded that we are responsible for our loved ones and our friends and co-workers and neighbors.
6. Cain said, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). The answer is “yes.”
7. This responsibility to warn the lost is taught all throughout the Bible.
8. King Jehoshaphat said to the Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, “Ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you” (II Chron. 19:8).
9. Bro. Van Gelderen made an interesting statement last Sunday. He said that when God sent an angel to Cornelius in Acts 10, the angel told Cornelius to send men to Joppa, and to call for Peter, so that Peter could preach the Gospel to them.
10. God could have simply had the angel preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his kinsmen and friends. But God has given that responsibility and privilege to you and me.
11. By the way, according to Revelation 14:6, during the tribulation period, an angel will preach the gospel to sinners.
12. But right now, this is our responsibility. And Ezekiel 3:18 says that if we do not warn the wicked to turn from his wicked way, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; “but his blood will I require at thine hand.”
13. The image of blood on the hands, or blood on the head, goes all the way back to Genesis 9:5, “And surely your blood of your lives will I require.”
14. Six times in Leviticus 20 we read these words, “His blood shall be upon him” (Lev. 20:9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 27).
15. Right before the conquest of Jericho, Joshua said to Rahab the harlot, “And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him” (Joshua 2:19).

16. When David's soldier killed an Amalekite, who claimed that he killed King Saul on the battlefield, David said to the Amalekite, "Thy blood be upon thy head" (II Samuel 1:16).
17. After Joab murdered Abner, David said, "I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD forever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner" (II Sam. 3:28).
18. In Isaiah 1:15, the LORD said to hypocritical Israelites, "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."
19. And again, in Isaiah 59:3, "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness."
20. When we come to the New Testament, we see how the apostle Paul applied Ezekiel 3:17 and 18 to his ministry.
21. Acts 18:6 says that when the Jews opposed Paul's preaching, and blasphemed, Paul shook his raiment, and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."
22. Paul made a similar statement in Acts 20:26, 27, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
23. We must warn the wicked. This is our responsibility.
24. I shall never forget a true story concerning Dr. Lee Roberson, who was the pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga for many years. A member of his church slipped him a piece of paper with an unsaved lady's name and address on it, asking him to visit her. The lady's husband had just died and she needed help. Pastor Roberson got home and emptied his pockets, putting the slip of paper on his desk. But while studying for a message, he inadvertently buried the paper under some books. A couple of weeks later, he was putting the books away and clearing his desk when he discovered the slip of paper. "Oh no!" he thought, "I had better go and visit her tomorrow."
25. The next morning, Bro. Roberson went out early to pick up the newspaper. When he opened the paper, the front page story was about a lady who had hung herself. He ran into the house and found the piece of paper on his desk - it was the same woman! Bro. Roberson said that, though many years had passed, he was still bothered by what happened.
26. Evangelist R.A. Torrey told this sad story: "The time is short indeed. The opportunity is today. Strike now, or you will never strike at all. How fast the clock goes! One evening when Mr. Alexander and I were in Brighton, England, one of the workers went out from the afternoon meeting to a restaurant for his evening meal. His attention was drawn toward the man

who waited upon him and there came to his heart a strong impression that he should speak to that waiter about his soul, but that seemed to him such an unusual thing to do that he kept putting it off. When the meal was ended and the bill paid, he stepped out of the restaurant, but he had such a feeling that he should speak to that waiter, that he decided to wait outside until the waiter came out. In a little while the proprietor came out and began to put up the shutters and asked him why he was waiting. He replied that he was waiting to speak with the man who had waited upon him at the table. The proprietor replied: 'You will never speak to that man again. After waiting upon you he went to his room and shot himself.' Oh, men and women, there are opportunities open to every one of us tonight that will be gone, and gone forever before another day dawns. The time is short!"

27. Many Christians have this unscriptural notion that soulwinning is only for the pastor or other preachers. Ephesians 4:11, 12 says that God gave evangelists and pastors and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."
28. The Great Commission is for the local church. Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:18-20).
29. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16).
30. Acts 1:8 says, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
31. God has given us the responsibility to warn the unsaved. And He has also given us the power – "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me..."

II. SOME ARE HARD-HEARTED AND WILL REFUSE TO LISTEN

1. Note Ezekiel 3:7 – "impudent and hardhearted." Note verse 11 – "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (refuse to hear)" (cf. 2:5, 7; 3:11, 27).
2. The people of Israel were very rebellious and obstinate and stubborn (cf. 2:5, 6, 7, 8; 3:9, 26, 27).

3. Note “impudent” (2:4; 3:7), and “stiff-hearted” (cf. 2:4) and “hard-hearted” (3:7).
4. Illustration of little girl in Sunday School who learned how sinners’ hearts get harder and harder.
5. Because of their stubborn unbelief, they were judged by God, and their doom could not be averted (3:4-11; cf. 33:21).
6. We heard some very good preaching on this subject last week. “He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).
7. I will not repeat the stories since most of you heard them.
8. I’m reading a book about great evangelists of the past. Mordecai Ham was preaching in a town down south during Prohibition, and some moonshiners started throwing rocks at the church where he was preaching, and the gang stole many of his personal effects.
9. When Ham confronted the leader of the gang, the man pulled out a knife. Ham told the man to put away the knife and said to him, “Now I am going to ask the Lord to either convert you or kill you.”
10. The man died the very next day, and three of his fellow gang members died shortly afterward in a sawmill explosion. Right after that, all of the stolen property was quickly returned to Mordecai Ham.
11. A young man was saved in one of Mordecai Ham’s revival meetings but he struggled with his call to preach. Then one day, this young man saw a terrible car accident. A man was hit by a speeding car, and as he lay in the street he cried out, “I’m lost. I’m lost, I can see hell, I can see hell!”
12. The young man started preaching after that.
13. Though the nation of Israel was already under the judgment of God, God in His long-suffering still gave the individual an opportunity to escape the impending judgment, so that by hearing and obeying the Word of God he might live (cf. 18:4-9).
14. The situation is the same today. It may very well be too late for America, with legal abortion and homosexuality and transgenderism and pornography and all of the other horrible sins against a holy God. But God is still patient and long-suffering with individual sinners, and if they repent God will save them.
15. But if sinners refuse to repent, there is nothing but certain judgment waiting for them.
16. Second Chronicles 36:16 says the wrath of the LORD arose against them, “till there was no remedy.”
17. There is no remedy for continual, stubborn unbelief. Only judgment.

III. GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED (33:11)

1. God wants sinners to repent (Ezek. 33:11).
2. First Timothy 2:4 says that God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
3. Second Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
4. God is merciful and patient with sinners (Ezekiel 18:23, 31, 32).

CONCLUSION:

1. We do not have watchmen today like they did back in Israel, but we have night watchmen, security guards, and policemen.
2. But God is not speaking here of these types of watchmen. He said to the prophet Ezekiel: “I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel...give them warning from me” (3:17).
3. Today, God wants you and me to be watchmen. The duties of a watchman are:
 - To watch while others sleep.
 - To warn while others are indifferent.
 - To awaken by sounding an alarm. Are you sounding the alarm?
4. The Niagara River rushes down towards Niagara Falls, and at first it is placid and slow. But it reaches a point where it rises and picks up speed. Those who know this river say there is a spot they call “the point of no return.” When you come to that place, you cannot turn around and go back. You’re going over the falls if you pass “the point of no return.”
5. Many sinners reach the point of no return.