

## Ezekiel 3:16-27 – Belgic Confession 30 – “Hear the Warning of the Watchman”

Introduction: **Because God’s word is given to his watchman to keep us from evil, we will listen when the watchman speaks.**

### 1) The Responsibility of the Watchman (vs. 16-21)

- Our text begins with Ezekiel being commissioned to an important task. He is appointed to be a watchman over the house of Israel. A city needs a watchman. He looks out over the city walls to see whether there is an army approaching, or spies attempting to sneak over the wall, anything that might put the people in danger.
- The difference is that Ezekiel is a spiritual watchman, he receives warnings directly from God, and he must pass those warnings on to God’s people. These warnings could be for an unrepentant wicked person, or for a righteous person who may find themselves stumbling into sin. Ultimately, the prophet is not responsible for the response of the hearers, but if he doesn’t give the warnings, he may find himself bearing guilt himself.
- The minister of the word holds a similar responsibility to the prophets. Today, however, the minister’s speech doesn’t come from a direct word from God, but through a careful study of the Scriptures. In particular, the word tells us about Christ! It tells us the way to be forgiven our iniquity and to be declared righteous through hm.
- Not only is Christ declared in the preaching of the sermon, he is also declared to us in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Through that preaching we receive the doctrine that we need to believe in order to be saved. We also learn what things we need to avoid and how we can lead each other away from stumbling blocks in life. It is through this preaching that God saves his people (1 Tim 4:11-16) and the minister is responsible to do this faithfully.

### 2) The Response of the Hearers (vs. 22-27)

- As seen above, the hearers will be responsible for their response to the preaching of the word. God doesn’t paint a pretty picture of how Israel will respond to his preaching. They will tie him up in order to prevent him from preaching wherever he wants.
- It is possible that we as God’s people can respond in the same way. Of course, we wouldn’t physically restrain our preacher, but we may mentally resist what he has to say. We often do this by coming to the preaching with a critical attitude or using criteria that are not God’s criteria. The real question to ask is whether God’s messenger is faithfully declaring what his word teaches.
- God has a warning for the rebellious people who would bind his prophet. God will shut his prophet’s mouth. The prophet will no longer give God’s people warnings from the watchtower, but instead he will leave them in their sins. To have a prophet who has been muted means the people are condemned.
- This is a warning for us as well. We might think that our criticism of the pastor is innocent, light-hearted entertainment on the way home from church. However, are we in this way training our children or our spouse to be critical of the pastor, rather than to focus on the word from the Lord? If this is the attitude to the preaching, then what confidence do we have that we will continue to be provided with faithful watchmen? Let us continue to treasure both the office and work of the pastor, because God has given this to us for our salvation.