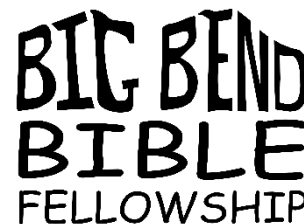


Ezekiel's Calling

(2) Ezekiel 2:1 – 3:15

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Eze 2:1-2, Ezekiel commanded to receive his call

And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you." ² Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.

v1-2 – Why did God refer to Ezekiel as son of man?

This is the first of 93 times God used this phrase to address Ezekiel. It is a title that emphasizes that he is a man among men, and something of a representative of humanity.

Why did Jesus refer to Himself as the Son of Man?

Son of Man was also a phrase Jesus used to refer to Himself, recorded some 80 times in the Gospels. Yet Jesus' use of the phrase is more connected with the idea from Daniel 7:13, where *Son of Man* describes the divine Messiah...

*Daniel 7:13 – I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!*

Why do you think God called Ezekiel to stand up?

He is told to *stand*, to hear God's message and to receive his call. He was to receive a message from God that requires his utmost attention.

What is the significance of the Spirit entering Ezekiel when God spoke to him?

The Holy Spirit still works in people through the Word of God. He empowered Ezekiel to have special power for his tasks and to remember and understand what God revealed to him.

- *Set me on my feet*: Ezekiel could not stand before the glory of the Lord, but the Spirit entered him and worked in him to do what God commanded.

Eze 2:3-5, The call to speak to rebellious Israel

³ *And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. ⁴ For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.'* ⁵ *As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.*

v3-5 – What did God call Ezekiel to do?

God sent Ezekiel to speak to a difficult audience. They were rebellious by nature, and their rebellion was even worse because it was against the God who had loved them and done so much for them. Truly, they were impudent and stubborn children.

- They are the *children of Israel*, often fleshly and grasping like their father Jacob.
- They are a *rebellious nation*, often more like the gentiles (*goyim*) than God's own people
- They have *rebelled against* God, and are traitors and rebels
- They are *impudent and stubborn children*, like insubordinate teens

Why was Ezekiel instructed to say, "Thus says the Lord God"?

Ezekiel was sent to Israel to speak *God's* words, not his own. This was not about what Ezekiel liked or did not like; it was about being God's messenger. So it should be true for every pastor, preacher, and Bible teacher today.

How would Israel know that a prophet has been among them?

- God told Ezekiel that whether Israel would hear or not, it wouldn't change his fundamental message. So, do not fear, but speak boldly!
- Being the messenger, he was not ultimately responsible for how the message was received—only to pass on what God gave him to reveal.
- Eventually, Israel would realize that Ezekiel was speaking for God in the fulfillment of prophecies.

Eze 2:6-8, Do not fear, but speak boldly

⁶ “And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house. ⁷ You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious. ⁸ But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.”

v6-8 – What instructions did God give Ezekiel?

- *Do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words:* God warned Ezekiel that many would reject his message. Their rejection would sting like *briars*, like *thorns*, and like *scorpions*—yet it should not drive the prophet to fear and despair.
- *Or dismayed by their looks:* Sometimes the rejection of a message is seen in look of disdain or proud defiance.
- *Whether they hear or whether they refuse:* Ezekiel was not to allow the acceptance or the rejection of the message to determine his work. Like Paul exhorted Timothy, he was to preach the word in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2).
- *Hear what I say to you:* Though the house of Israel may rebel against God’s word, it was essential the Ezekiel the prophet surrender and submit to it.
- *Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house:* The people were rebellious, but Ezekiel could not be. He had to be surrendered to the Lord even if they were not, and especially if they were not.
- *Open your mouth and eat what I give to you:* Ezekiel was to personally internalize every word of God—to *eat* His words.

Eze 2:9-10, The words of judgment against Israel

⁹ Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. ¹⁰ Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe.

v9-10 – What did God give Ezekiel?

It isn’t clear if this was the hand of God or an angelic hand... it doesn’t matter; the point is that God gave the scroll to Ezekiel.

- *scroll of a book:* This emphasizes that God’s word was not only the spontaneous word spoken to His appointed prophets. God had a plan, a purpose, and authority for His *written* word.

- *There was writing on the inside and the outside:* Ezekiel could see that it was *full* of God’s message. It was complete.
- *On it were lamentations and mourning and woe:* This was the most important message for the house of Israel to hear, and it was the message that would be sharply rejected.

Eze 3:1-3, Eating the scroll

Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” ² So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. ³ And He said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.” So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.

v3:1 – Why is Ezekiel told a second time to eat the scroll God gave him?

Earlier in chapter 2 the prophet was told that he must eat the scroll (Ezekiel 2:8). Now, with the scroll in front of him the command is repeated.

- We must remember that God’s Word is not just for passing on to others, we must feed on it ourselves. The eating of the scroll was not just a spiritual experience for Ezekiel, he must receive, internalize and digest the word of God before he could be a messenger of that word to *the house of Israel*.

v2 – Did Ezekiel actually munch on the scroll God gave him?

- If so, it must have been made of parchment which is derived from animal skins, papyrus would result in a serious case of indigestion.
- The context is almost certainly a vision God gave the prophet... So, he wouldn’t have actually eaten a physical scroll, but experienced it in a vision.

v3 – How much of the scroll was Ezekiel told to eat?

fill your stomach with this scroll: Ezekiel wasn’t to mere “taste” or “sample” God’s written revelation. He was to *fill* himself with it, especially because it was received from God (*that I give you*).

How did the scroll taste?

It was in my mouth like honey in sweetness: Ezekiel experienced it as not only sweet, but as sweet as the sweetest thing he could imagine...

Psalm 119:103 – *How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

How does Ezekiel's experience consuming God's word differ from John?

Revelation 10:10 – *Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.*

Probably not at all, Ezekiel did not explain the result of digesting the scroll. John was told the little book would be bitter on his stomach and indeed it was. The pouring out of God's wrath is a bitter pill to swallow even though we are not the object of His wrath.

Ezek 3:4-9, Strength for a difficult calling

⁴ Then He said to me: "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. ⁵ For you are not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, but to the house of Israel, ⁶ not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you. ⁷ But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. ⁸ Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. ⁹ Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house."

v4 – What was Ezekiel's call that was emphasized here?

Go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them: Ezekiel's call as a prophet is once again stated, as in Ezekiel 2:3-5 and 2:7. As a prophet he could not be silent; he had to *speak*. Yet he could not speak his words, but God's words to them.

v5-6 – What does it mean Ezekiel was not being sent to a people of unfamiliar speech?

Ezekiel's calling was not primarily to the Gentile nations, but to Israel. Even Paul who was called to minister to the Gentiles always visited the synagogues first:

Romans 1:16 – *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

Jesus also indicated that Israel as a nation would come around to Him but not until after the Gentiles do...

Matthew 20:16 – *So the last will be first, and the first last.*

That was the point of Stephen's sermon in Acts 7... Israel always got things right the second time. So there has to be

a first time in order for them to come around to the Lord the second time.

Would the people of Israel listen to Ezekiel?

Had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you: Ezekiel's focus on his own people made his ministry more difficult. The Gentiles would have been more receptive to his message, even as Nineveh responded to the preaching of Jonah.

John 4:44 – *Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.*

Why didn't God send the people to Ezekiel then?

v7 – *They will not listen to Me:* God knows their heart and knows they would not obey Him...

For all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.

So why did God even bother to send Ezekiel with His message?

Out of His grace... some would respond even if the nation did not.

v8-9 – How did God equip Ezekiel for his mission impossible?

Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead: Since Israel was committed to their rebellion and rejection of God, God would strengthen Ezekiel to answer their commitment with an even greater commitment.

- God promised to equip Ezekiel emotionally and intellectually to deal with the anticipated rejection. He'd be able to 'butt heads' with the butt-heads.

Eze 3:10-11, Getting to those who must hear

¹⁰ *Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. ¹¹ And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse."*

How is Ezekiel called to begin his ministry?

Receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you: The prophet's work began with *receiving*. He had to listen and *receive* everything God said.

What does it mean to receive the word of God?

Accept them, understand them, make them your own and apply them to your life.

What was Ezekiel to do after he received the word of God?

Go, get to the captives, to the children of your people: Having received God's word, Ezekiel then needed to **get** among his people, those to whom he would speak. What is implied in this is having a relationship with them which would be necessary to communicate God's word.

Why did God have him say, "Thus says the Lord God"?

Once he was among his people, Ezekiel then had to actually speak to them God's word. His job was to deliver God's message, and not one from himself or any other.

Was Ezekiel called to change what he said based on how the people responded?

No, *whether they hear, or whether they refuse:* Ezekiel had to faithfully deliver this message no matter how it was received. His proclamation of didn't depend on their reception. Among all the prophets Ezekiel probably spoke in the most unusual and innovative ways, yet it was always to deliver *God's* message.

What is the application of Ezekiel's calling to our own?

We have a calling as well: The Great Commission. We too need to prepare by studying and applying God's Word and build relationships with people in order to share God's Word. And not be swayed by whether people are receptive to God's Word or not... keep sharing it.

Eze 3:12-15, The Lord and the living creatures

¹² *Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place!"* ¹³ *I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise.* ¹⁴ *So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.* ¹⁵ *Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.*

What was the great thunderous voice Ezekiel heard?

Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place! Probably from one of the *living creatures* (cherubim) that came again to his attention. Having been given such a difficult commission, it was important for Ezekiel to remain impressed by and confident in *the glory of the Lord*.

What else besides the thunderous voice did Ezekiel hear?

I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures: The strange and amazing vision of Ezekiel chapter 1 once again came into view. The sense is that the *living creatures* and the *wheels* and all associated with them remained present all the time, but Ezekiel was so focused on God and his own experience of calling that he paid them little attention.

Where did the Spirit take Ezekiel?

So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away: We don't know whether Ezekiel was taken physically or spiritually. Yet the fact that he began at the River Chebar (Ezekiel 1:3) and was still there at the end of the vision indicate that his experience was a vision.

Why was Ezekiel bitter?

- Perhaps Ezekiel was bitter at being a captive, while others still lived and served in Jerusalem at the temple.
- Perhaps he was bitter at the difficulty of his call.
- Perhaps he was bitter at the sin and rebellion of the people of Israel.
- Perhaps the words of God he ate became bitter in his stomach as was the case with John and the little book... God's judgment on Israel was a bitter pill to swallow.

What enabled Ezekiel to go on despite his bitterness?

but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me: God equipped Ezekiel to do what He called him to do.

How did Ezekiel react to His vision?

I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished: Ezekiel did what God told him to do. He said, *go, get to the captives* (Ezekiel 3:11) and he did. Once among them, he spent *seven days* stunned by the amazing vision and call of God upon his life.

- Perhaps it is not without significance that seven days was the period for the consecration of a priest:
Lev. 8:33 – *And you shall not go outside the door of the tabernacle of meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration are ended.*
- Ezekiel may have regarded this as the preparation for his ordination to a prophetic priesthood.

What applications are there in Ezekiel's call for us?

We too are called to be God's representatives to a rebellious people... God will equip us to do what He calls us to do... Don't compromise God's Word even if it is not popular.