

Watchman Ezekiel

(3) Ezekiel 3:16 – 3:27

By Scott Huckaby

4/18/2021

**BIG BEND
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Eze 3:16-19 – Responsibility to warn the wicked ¹⁶ Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹⁷ “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: ¹⁸ When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹ Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

What was God calling Ezekiel to be?

I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel: God used the figure of the **watchman** to describe Ezekiel’s responsibility, here and in Ezekiel 33.

- He fulfilled his role as a **watchman** not just by observing others, but by faithfully proclaiming God’s Word to bring God’s **warning** to the people.

Was watchman a unique role for a prophet?

God was gracious to provide a **watchman** at all. Ezekiel was not the first to define the prophetic office in terms of a sentry. The 8th-century prophet Hosea makes the identification in 9:8, and alludes to it in 5:8 and 8:1, where he calls for the blowing of the horn. Isaiah 56:10 refers to blind sentries, visionaries who are asleep, presumably false or negligent prophets.

Do we have watchmen today?

There is always a place for those to do what Ezekiel was called to do as a watchman – to **hear a word** from God and warn people who are in danger.

What is the responsibility of a watchman?

To warn the wicked of the danger they are in. *When I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” and you give him no warning:* God explained the sin and the penalty of failing to be a faithful watchman. If God’s message was not delivered, then *his blood I will require at your hand.* The focus of the watchman’s work is not examination of

the **wicked**, but on the faithful declaration of God’s message.

What is the consequence of the watchman for failing to warn the wicked?

His blood I will require at your hand

The watchman who fails to warn the wicked will be guilty of murder.

Does God expect more from those He calls?

Yes...

Luke 12:48 – *For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required*

This statement of Jesus has become somewhat of an idiom in Western culture and is found, paraphrased, in Uncle Ben’s words of wisdom to Peter Parker in Spider-man: “With great power comes great responsibility.”

- The idea of “*to whom much is given, much will be required*” is that we are held responsible for what we have. If we are blessed with talents, wealth, knowledge, time, and the like, it is expected that we use these well to glorify God and benefit others.

Is the death spoken of here physical or spiritual?

It certainly could apply to spiritual death but since the Jews were focused on the Mosaic Law, this would be taken by a Jewish audience to be physical death.

What will be the result of the faithful watchman?

- The wicked will be warned and he would bear no guilt if the message was rejected.
- The one who rejected the message would *die in his iniquity*, under the judgment of God.
- Yet of Ezekiel, faithfully delivering God’s message, it would be said, *you have delivered your soul.*

In what sense should we all be watchmen (or in today’s politically correct vernacular, watchpersons)?

1 Peter 2:9 – *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people*

As a people being blessed with knowledge of the Lord, this comes with a responsibility, to help other to know Him.

Believers are priests of God, representing God to people as were the prophets.

- Our watchman role today is to help people realize the danger they are in not recognizing Jesus as their Savior.

Does that mean that we should go around telling unbelievers they are going to hell if they don't repent?

That is generally not how we should approach people...

1 Corinthians 13:1 – *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

Tact calls for love which means establishing a relationship with people sufficient to discuss spiritual matters.

- While it is the Holy Spirit who does all the heavy lifting when it comes to people being saved, He uses us to encourage others in that direction...

1 Corinthians 3:6 – *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*

What is a practical way to be a watchman given the events of our day?

Guaranteed, there will be something that happens during our times that disturbs people. We can always remind them that God is in control and He is allowing what is happening for a reason.

- That is a faith flag... revealing that you are a Christian and that you have a biblical worldview. If they are responding to the Holy Spirit working on their heart, they will ask you a follow-up question thus giving you permission to go deeper with them.
- If there is no follow-up question, you'd be wasting your time to discuss spiritual matters with them...

Matthew 7:6 – *Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.*

At what point should you share the good news of Jesus with people?

After you have established some degree of rapport with them and they have demonstrated interest in spiritual matters by the questions they ask.

How can we be a watchman to people we've just met when we don't have time to develop much of a relationship with them?

We can still connect with them and plant a seed or water a seed; Beach Reach training...

- S – Start Conversations
- A – Ask Questions
- L – Listen
- T – Tell them about Jesus

Starting conversations... ask them about themselves and keep asking questions until you identify something you have in common with them... Everybody has something in common with everyone else.

Ask questions... us a transitional question to get them thinking about spiritual matters and express their opinion in a non-threatening way, that promotes dialog...

- What brings you the most satisfaction in life?
- What is your spiritual background?
- What do you think about life after death?
- Have you reached the point in your life where you're sure you're going to heaven?
- Suppose that you were to die today and God said to you, "Why should I let you into Heaven?" What would you say?

Listen... Listening allows you to know what questions to ask in the conversation. It also lets you know what aspects of the gospel you may need to address when sharing.

Tell them about Jesus... Since you've listened to their perspective, you've earned the right to plant or water a seed of the good news of Jesus. Stating the good news of Jesus can and should be drop-dead-simple:

- Our mortal life is a test to see who will accept the provision God made for us to spend eternity with Him: that Jesus paid the penalty of our sin when He died on the cross.

John 3:16 – *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Eze 3:20-21 – Responsibility to warn the righteous

“Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”

Who is Ezekiel being charged with to warn here?

When a righteous man turns from his righteousness: The previous verses told of Ezekiel's responsibility to warn the wicked. Now God told him he also had a responsibility to warn the **righteous** who may stray from God's path.

Why do the righteous need to be warned?

Being righteous doesn't mean we are without sin in this mortal life. Sin in this mortal life still has consequences both in this mortal life and in eternity.

- In this life: (besides obvious consequences even unbelievers recognize) loss of fellowship & fruit of the Spirit
- Eternity: loss of rewards

What would be the consequence to Ezekiel for not being faithful in this area?

If Ezekiel did not give the righteous this warning, he would share in responsibility for their sin (*his blood I will require at your hand*).

Who were the righteous here?

Essentially the man who showed by his good living his adherence to the covenant, the Mosaic code.

How about today, who are the righteous?

Those who profess to be a Christian and attend church regularly. True followers of Christ will not forsake being with the ones they love...

John 13:35 – *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

What kinds of things do the righteous need to be warned about today?

- False doctrine – salvation by works, universalism, Cheap Grace (easy believe-ism) not recognizing the inerrancy of God's Word
- Sin – harms their fellowship and witness

Why is it unpopular to point out sin in church anymore?

- It is easier to just tell people what they want to hear and not bring up painful topics.
- The seeker-friendly approach to church growth... compromising with the world to draw a crowd.
- Overcompensation for legalism which can become a problem in the church.
- It is a characteristic of the Laodicean times we are in... thinking we are spiritually wealthy but being lukewarm toward Christ

What sort of stumbling block will God bring into the lives of the righteous who commit inequity?

It does not say that God deliberately sets out to trip up the righteous, but that He provides opportunities for sin, so that if someone is bent on sin they may do so and thus suffer the resulting consequences.

How can the righteous die in their sin?

This is physical death, the Old Testament version of sin unto death...

1 John 5:16 – *If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death.*

This is what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–10. The “sin unto death” is willful, continuous, unrepentant sin. God has called His children to holiness (1 Peter 1:16), and God corrects them when they sin. We are not “punished” for our sin in the sense of losing salvation, yet we are disciplined...

“The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son” (Heb 12:6)

1 John 5:16 says there comes a point when God can no longer allow a believer to continue in unrepentant sin. When that point is reached, God may decide to take the life of the stubbornly sinful believer. The “death” is physical death.

What other consequence besides death will there be for the righteous committing inequity?

His righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered: This is the price paid by many righteous people who fail to finish well. The real good they have **done shall not be remembered**. One sin or season of sin can easily wipe out an otherwise good reputation. Famous apologist Ravi Zacharias comes to mind here.

What is the win-win in warning the righteous?

If Ezekiel were faithful to bring the message and the righteous were kept from their sin, it would be good for the one who kept the warning (**he shall surely live because he took warning**), and good for the prophet (**you will have delivered your soul**).

Eze 3:22-23 – Another vision of the glory of the Lord

Then the hand of the Lord was upon me there, and He said to me, “Arise, go out into the plain, and there I shall talk with you.” So I arose and went out into the plain, and behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, like the glory which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face.

What does it mean “the hand of the Lord was upon” Ezekiel?

For the third time (Ezekiel 1:3 and 3:14) Ezekiel experienced this. Once again Ezekiel had to prepare himself to hear and receive God's word.

What was the glory of the Lord that Ezekiel saw?

Although this is the third time he sees a renewed vision of the glory of the Lord, the sight still catches him by surprise and overwhelms him with awe. His relationship with God never becomes familiar or casual—even a commissioned and authorized spokesman must prostrate himself in the presence of God.

What is the application for us today in what we have discussed?

God wants all His people during the Age of Grace to be watchmen... making people aware of the danger they're in not having Jesus in their life and Christians the danger they're in by allowing sin to be part of their lives.

Eze 3:24-27 – The difficulty of the call restated.

Then the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and spoke with me and said to me: "Go, shut yourself inside your house. And you, O son of man, surely they will put ropes on you and bind you with them, so that you cannot go out among them. I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and not be one to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious house. But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

Why do you think God wanted Ezekiel to stand before Him?

God wanted Ezekiel's full attention for what He was about to tell him.

Why did God tell Ezekiel to, "go, shut yourself inside your house"?

God told Ezekiel to symbolically act out a message through isolation, inactivity, and silence either: (1) what would happen to Ezekiel from the people of Israel as they rejected his message and punished him, (2) An acted-out prophecy of the doom and helplessness to come upon Israel, or (3) An illustration of God's silence toward Israel.

When would God allow Ezekiel to speak again?

When God spoke to him again... God would not stay silent forever, and thus neither would Ezekiel. God would restore his ability to speak and he would fulfill his role as God's messenger.

What responsibility did the people have to the Word of God?

He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse: With Ezekiel speaking as he should, delivering God's message, the responsibility would be on those he spoke to and not upon himself. Israel as *a rebellious house* would have to answer for their own sin, and could not claim they never heard.