

EZEKIEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ezekiel chapter 33 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Tonight we are going to be studying the third division of this book of Ezekiel. We saw in Ezekiel chapters 1 through 24 the sin of Judah and the judgment of God. Then we looked at the judgment of the nations that surrounded Jerusalem in Ezekiel chapters 25 through 32. And this evening, in Ezekiel chapter 33 we will be looking at this last call for repentance to Israel.

The focus of this chapter is the watchman as we see in Ezekiel 33:7, **“So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me.”** You see, the Southern Kingdom of Judah had turned away from the Lord and thus, we see the word **“turn”** or SHUWB, (shoob) used some 9 times in these 33 verses.

The idea with this word is to return back to the point of departure or really it speaks of repentance. That truly is what repentance is all about. Of stopping the direction you are going, away from the Lord, and turn back to the Lord. Thus, we see here this last call for repentance to Israel.

With that as our background let's begin reading in Ezekiel chapter 33 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

EZEKIEL 33**VERSES 1-6**

1. Remember back in Ezekiel chapter 3 we read of how God commissioned Ezekiel as a watchman for the nation. And now, here in Ezekiel chapter 33 we see God re-commissioning Ezekiel to be a watchman over the nation. Keep in mind that Judah has already been taken captive and we will read of that here in this chapter.

But that is not the end of God's people and they needed to be warned, they need to see what was before them if they refused to turn back to God, to repent of their sins. It is this repentance that will produce forgiveness but apart from repentance, apart from this turning there is only judgment!

2. Make no mistake about it; the job of a watchman was very important. Now we may wonder what the responsibility of the watchman was and it is really very simple. The watchman was to warn the people of any danger that was coming upon the city. They would station themselves on the walls of the city to watch for any trouble. If you failed to warn the people it could have deadly consequences!

And thus, these prophets of God or really these watchmen are there to warn the people of God's coming judgment because of their sin, to warn them of the danger that is out there or to encourage them as they live for God. But here it is speaking of God's judgment coming upon them because of their sin. Now if they heed this warning and turn from their wicked ways, they shall live. But if they refused to heed the warnings and get right with God, they will die in their sins.

Now some like to blame the religious leaders and these false prophets for telling the people that everything was okay, not to worry. And make no mistake about it, they were responsible before God for what they were teaching and God will deal with them in Ezekiel chapter 34.

But here we see personal responsibility, that if there is a warning and a person refuses to hear, if he refuses to obey and turn from his wicked ways, then he is responsible for the consequences that come upon him. They can't blame anyone if they have not done anything with the information that they received.

Now God tells us if the watchman see's danger, judgment coming and does not warn the people, the people will die because they are accountable for their actions. But make no mistake about it, like I have said the watchman is also accountable for not warning the people. We have seen this in our studies through Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel as the false prophets refused to warn the people of God's coming judgment, and the judgment came!

3. We will deal with this subject of the watchman a little more deeply in a few minutes because it is a very important topic today. There are many out there that think that warning people of the danger is wrong, it is not loving, that we are better off letting people see what we are for than what we are against. And as great as that may sound for some people, the reality is that if you are standing up for something that means you are standing against something else.

For instance, if you say that marriage is between a man and a woman and it is till death do we part that means you are against homosexual marriages, you are against adultery, you are against fornication. When you stand for something there will be something you are against, that just makes sense. That is just the way it is and we see not only the prophets of God in the Old Testament but the apostles and even Jesus stand against ungodly practices as they warned the people that if they did not repent they will die in their sins! But again, we will deal with this more in a few minutes because we need to stand up for the truth today, we need to be watchman and we are responsible before God if we close our mouths to these warnings!

VERSES 7-9

1. As we have seen God has re-commissioned Ezekiel as the watchman for the nation. And I want you to listen again to what verse 7 says because it is very important. We read, **“So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me.”**

Before you speak for God what do you have to do first? You have to hear from God! I know that may sound funny but it is amazing the numbers of people who claim that are speaking for God and yet they have not heard from God. Thus, they are speaking out of the imagination of their own heart and when you hear what they have to say you clearly see that! The idea here is that we need to open our ears to the things of God before we open our mouth! You can't give what you don't have!

Paul made this point in II Timothy 2:15, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** Paul is telling Timothy to work hard, to be diligent in the work he is doing. There are times when people should be ashamed at the work they are doing because it was done poorly. But that should not be the case in our service to the Lord, and as a pastor, Timothy was to **“rightly divide”** God’s Word or “to cut straight.”

The Geek word, ORTHOTOMEIO, (or-thot-om-eh'-o) was used of a craftsman cutting a straight line, or a farmer plowing a straight furrow, or a mason setting a straight line for bricks. Thus, there is a right way to teach God’s Word, to share what it means, and a wrong way!

Let me give you an example of what I mean. In John 18:1-6 we are told, **“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ They answered Him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am He.’ And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.”**

Here is the wrong way to interpret these verses and as you will see they did not hear from God they just spoke. There are those who are into being slain in the Spirit and they will use this verse as evidence to support this practice. The idea they like to bring forth is that the power of God is so strong it will knock you to the ground; some are even glued to the floor. That is not rightly dividing the Word of God.

How can I be so sure that they are not right? Because of what God's Word has to say. You see, God has spoken and we need to listen. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested, those men who fell to the ground were not saved, they were not believers. When Jesus said, "**I am**" I do believe it was the power of God that knocked them down, but not a practice we see with believers or even with unbelievers.

You don't see it practiced in the book of Acts, nor do you see it in the Epistles. And you don't see it practiced in the early church. You see, rightly dividing the Word of God doesn't mean you make it say what you want it to say, but what God is saying and you are just speaking it forth, you are telling the people or you are warning the people!

Let me give you another example to show you how strange it is out there and how people pervert the Scriptures to make them say what they want them to say, not what God is saying. They are not hearing from God!

This is a story of a young woman who posed nude for a pornographic magazine, supposedly she was a Christian. At least that is what she claims. How in the world did she come to such a conclusion that posing nude for a pornographic magazine was of God?

She used the Scriptures to support what she did as she claimed this experience of posing nude for these pictures had drawn her closer to God. She quoted the first part of James 4:8 to justify her actions. She was giving her Scriptural support for what she was doing.

That verse says, **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you . . .”** Sounds good but that is not rightly dividing the Word of God. How can I say she is wrong and is not rightly dividing the Word? Because if she would just read the rest of that verse she would see that her actions are wrong. Listen carefully to what James goes on to say in the last half of that verse, **“... Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”** James 4:8b.

The warning is serious, don't twist God's Word to make it say what you want, to use it to justify your sin. God means what He says and says what He means and we must not only proclaim it but also live by it! Ezekiel first heard God's Word, it spoke to his heart and then he shared what God was saying and that is what we need to do.

It is as Isaiah said in Isaiah 50:4-5, **“The Lord God has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away.”**

Now this is speaking of Jesus but I think it also applies to us in that the Lord speaks to us, He opens our ears and the words that come forth from our lips, from our tongue are His Words!

We are living in a day when we have people trying to tell us what God has said and the reality is we already know what God has said. Let me give you an example to show you the danger that is out there when we listen to man over God and His Word.

Stand Up For the Truth wrote the following article on what Rob Bell had to say regarding the church accepting homosexuality, that we are almost there in accepting homosexuality in the church, that it is a practice sanctioned by God! It is not. We are told,

Rob Bell and his wife, Kristen, are making headlines again, this time about gay marriage and the church. Before we start, just a point to our emergent friends: When it comes to heretical teachers like Bell, we are NOT to “eat the meat and spit out the bones (advice found nowhere in Scripture), but instead we are to follow the command to mark and avoid false teachers. . . .

Here’s an excerpt from the show that aired Sunday, Feb. 15. Reported what Bell said on Super Soul Sunday, airing on Oprah Winfrey’s OWN channel:

“One of the oldest aches in the bones of humanity is loneliness,” Rob Bell said. “Loneliness is not good for the world. Whoever you are, gay or straight, it is totally normal, natural and healthy to want someone to go through life with. It’s central to our humanity. We want someone to go on the journey with.”

That statement prompted a question from Oprah: “When is the church going to get that?” “We’re moments away,” Rob Bell said. “I think culture is already there and the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense, when you have in front of you flesh-and-blood people who are your brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and co-workers and neighbors and they love each other and just want to go through life with someone.”

Said Kristen Bell: “There are churches who are moving forward and there are churches who are almost regressing and making it more of a battle.”

Bell recently started a broadcast group called “The Liturgists,” and promotes “mother God” and a deep mystical New Age mediation called “apophatic prayer.” Remember that Bell is part of the **Emergent Church**:

The Emergent Church movement is a progressive Christian movement that attempts to reduce or eliminate Christian doctrine in favor of experience and feelings. Most do not believe man can know what is absolute truth, and believe God must be experienced outside of traditional biblical doctrines.

It’s important to note that there are the well-known emergent leaders we’ve tracked: Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Rob Bell and Rick Warren (whom many of these leaders point to as their inspiration for the Emergent Movement). Then there is the next generation; the up-and-coming rookies who now are the prolific young voices at leadership conferences (like Catalyst and many others), that you can’t easily research because they don’t have anything questionable yet attached to their bios. But make no mistake: The leaders of old have not gone away, nor has the movement died. Instead it is shifting into a new or neo mode, making the Neo-Emergent movement even more insidious, confusion and (worst of all) appealing to a whole new audience of young Christians. It’s the same old “Hath God said” lie repackaged into a slick media marketing formula with programs helping many pastors “plug and play” with sermon topics and programs in their own churches to perpetuate the movement. Most don’t even know they’re doing it.

- <http://standupforthetruth.com/2015/02/rob-bell-moments-away-church-embracing-gay-marriage/>

Now hear me out on this. If we want people to like us, if we don’t want to rock the boat, we will be silent in regards to this issue but in doing so we are allowing many people to go to Hell apart from Christ! And what other issues are we going to be silent on?

“But Pastor Joe, there are many Christian homosexual churches out there or churches where they accept the homosexual lifestyle where people love Jesus! You can’t tell me they are going to Hell?” No I can’t but God’s Word does! There is no such thing as a Christian homosexual church even though I did a search and just for Wisconsin, there are too many to name that embrace homosexuality as a normal lifestyle.

Why can’t there be a Christian homosexual church? Because it goes against God’s Word. We see in the Old Testament, we see in the New Testament that homosexuality is a sin and you will not inherit the Kingdom of God, you will not go to heaven. You can’t say that you love Jesus and then do things that are contrary to what Jesus is saying.

Paul put it like this in I Corinthians 6:9-11, “**Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**”

Did you see what Paul said, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. And the key for me is where Paul said, “**. . . And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**” In other words they are no longer practicing that lifestyle; they are no longer doing those things that are contrary to the Word of God. Not that any of us is perfect but if you are engaged in a lifestyle that is contrary to the Word of God I would question your salvation!

Now some will say that is unloving and I disagree. Imagine being a watchman on the wall of the city and it is three in the morning and here comes an enemy; they are going to invade the city. But you don't want to wake everyone up, it is early in the morning and they need their sleep. You are going to show them how much you love them by not waking them up and in the end they will not appreciate what you have done because the enemy will break through the walls and capture them.

But what if they refuse to listen to what you are saying? There is nothing you can do about that. You see, we can't convert anyone that is up to the Holy Spirit! But we are responsible to blow the trumpet, to warn the people, to share the message we have been given. This is so important.

2. Another difficult point that we need to deal with is what the Lord said to Ezekiel in verses 8 and 9 of Ezekiel chapter 33. We are told, **“When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”**

Now as some read this they come to the conclusion that they can lose their salvation if they don't warn people of their sin, of the coming judgment, of Jesus! The problem is that far too often people take Old Testament words and make them into New Testament doctrine. I don't believe that for a minute. You see, if that were true then our salvation would be based upon our works instead of the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. We would have to maintain our salvation and if that were true none of us would make it. And think about it, how much warning do we need to do? There is nowhere you will find that and thus, none of us would be able to know if we were saved or not if it was based on this idea of being a watchman even though the Bible tells us we can know if we are saved or not!

Then how does this apply to us today? We do have the responsibility of speaking forth the Words of God, even those things that are difficult, those things that might not be politically correct as I have said already. There are those today that won't speak out against sin, homosexuality, immoral lifestyles, those things that tend to offend people. Why?

As Proverbs 29:25 says, "**The fear of the man brings a snare . . .**" And thus, to be popular, to fit in, to keep the big tithers coming into the church, they water down the Words of God. That is wrong. We are to give them the truths of God whether they want to hear them or not.

Remember how Paul warned Timothy. He said to Timothy, "**Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**" II Timothy 4:2-

Thus, I don't believe these verses here in Ezekiel are speaking of our position but they are speaking to us in a practical sense. Remember Paul's last meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20. He spent almost 3 years with these people, teaching them the things of God, sharing with them at the school of Tyrannus. And he say's to them beginning in verse 26 of Acts chapter 20, "**Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.**" Acts 20:26-27.

Paul did not hold back but spoke forth the whole council of God. He was not guilty before God in fulfilling his responsibility towards man. He spoke forth the truths of God even when they were unpopular and went against what society was saying. And thus, it was now up to them to take those words and heed them.

He continues on by saying in verse 28, "**Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**"

Paul is speaking to pastor's here and he is telling them to "*feed*" or "*shepherd*" the flock that God has given to them. We can look at David, his love for the sheep he watched over in the fields. And God saw those qualities of a shepherd would be needed to watch over the sheep, His people, as David became King over Israel. The word for "**shepherd**" is the Greek word POIMAINO and it carries with it the idea of not just feeding the sheep, but guiding them, leading them, guarding them, loving them, warning them and-so-on.

And Paul is trying to instill in these pastors a shepherd's heart. He continues to say in verse 29, **“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”** Acts 20:29-32.

Two important points Paul makes here. First of all they are to watch out for their sheep. Why? Because savage wolves are lurking around to pick them off and gobble them up. Secondly, they are to warn their sheep. Why? Because wolves dressed in sheep's clothing will rise up to capture them from within the church. Those are some of the responsibilities of a pastor today, to watch over and warn his people.

If you have been here at Calvary for any length of time you know that I have no problem speaking against false doctrine that has been creeping into the church at large. I speak against their teachings, only God knows their heart. And if they reject Jesus being God, His blood atonement, His death and resurrection then I can safely say they are not saved because their words attest to that fact.

Now if I refused to do that, if I was more concerned about my own popularity rather than the truths of God, I would not be a good watchman but I would be leaving the people that God has entrusted to me vulnerable for attack. And I am accountable for that!

And we can lose out on our rewards but we can't lose our salvation as I have said, that would be contrary to what the rest of the Scriptures are telling us. But for those who reject the truths of God found in the Word of God, if you do you are rejecting Jesus and thus, this is speaking of spiritual death to you, eternal separation from God. Remember what Jesus said in John 14:15, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments."**

Another area in the church today that has become a big problem is Psychology. I am not sure why this has taken root but it has. And maybe the issue is that it deals so much with self and we are self-consumed today and that goes for the church as well.

Over the past 100 years or so we have taken in the teachings of Freud, who was a cocaine addict and truly a sick man. Jung, who had a spirit guide named Philemon and Jung terrified Freud with this spirit guide. Then there is Carl Rogers who spoke to dead spirits. And when you look at these guys and you look at the things they believe, they go contrary to God's Word and thus, we should not be embracing them.

But what so-called Christian psychologists are telling us is that these men, and others like them, have the answers to man's mental health. Hey, listen carefully, these guys were so screwed up and yet they are supposed to have the answers for us. Psychologists, Psychiatrists have the highest suicide rate in any profession. Why? Because they are supposed to have the answers and the reality is, they don't!

And think about this idea of getting your degree in psychology, who are you going to study? Not men like Paul, or David, or Samuel, or even Jesus but these guys who had serious mental issues themselves. And if we really thought this through, what did Christians do for the last 1800 years or so before Freud, Jung and Rogers were around? I think they did a lot better!

Listen to what Paul said in Colossians 2:8-10 regarding what we are to be doing and not doing. He wrote, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

This is a very stern warning by Paul to the believers in Colosse to be aware, to pay attention because the world’s philosophies are deceptive and they want to take you away from Christ, they will rip you off!

The Greek word for **“philosophy”** is PHILOSOPHIA (fil-os-of-ee’-ah) and it comes from two Greek words; PHILEO, which means, “to love” and SOPHIA, which means, “wisdom.” So the word means the love of wisdom! Now here is the problem, you cannot find truth regarding life apart from Christ!

I know, some of you disagree with me, but hear me out. Look at the philosophies of the world over the years and how they change, how they contradict each other. Do they sometimes get it right? Yes, that is possible but why grope for answers to life’s problems, to life’s questions when God has the answer for you. Os Guinness puts it this way in regards to the futile effort of man and his search for the truths of life. He says,

Contemporary man, with his self-drawn picture of society as the “closed room” with No Exit, is caught metaphysically and sociologically. In the darkness of the room evidently without windows, perhaps without doors, he gropes round and round the edges. Can one hope that someone will dare to wonder whether there is any light other than the feeble sparks of his own making? Or will he stubbornly persist in treading the barren circle of poor premises?

- Os Guinness, The Dust of Death, p. 148

Thus, false teaching is according to the basic principles of the world, elementary knowledge like the ABC's and not according to Christ. In fact, Paul put it this way in Colossians 2:20, **“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations.”** Don't become a prisoner to the basic principles of this world because we have died to those things in Christ!

Here's the thing, if your car is broken down you don't get out your Bible but you take it to a mechanic or you get a book on auto repair. If you hurt your leg, sprained your ankle you may go to the doctor or read up on what you can do for it in a medical book. That doesn't mean we can't pray that God would fix the car or heal the ankle, but most of the time we must get it fixed. The Bible is not a book on science even though when it speaks of scientific things it is 100% correct.

Now, if you have a problem with your heart and soul, what do you do? You go to a therapist, a psychologist; you get books on how to overcome and-so-on, right? Wrong! That is what the church is doing today but it is not what we should be doing. When you have a problem with your heart and soul you bring it to Jesus, you get into the Word of God because the Word of God deals with life's issues; with ourselves, with our fellow man, and with God. The world's philosophies won't help you here, but they will hurt you!

And Paul goes on to tell us that we are complete in Christ. Then is Paul saying that those outside of Christ are not complete? You bet he is. You see, ever since the fall of man, we are born into this world in a state of incompleteness, spiritually speaking. And the reason for that is our fellowship with God is broken. Morally speaking because we do our own thing, we don't follow the will of God. And mentally speaking it is because we don't know the ultimate truth of God.

But once we are saved we are complete spiritually, our fellowship with God has been restored. We are complete morally in the sense that we have God's will to guide us. We are complete mentally because we have the truths of God in our lives. We have the mind of Christ.

Peter put it his way in II Peter 1:2-4, **“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”** Thus, may we enjoy that fact knowing we are complete in Him!

Don't fall prey to the empty philosophies of the world, the traditions of men, but look to the Lord to guide you in all your ways. God has given to us all we need for this life and that is found in His Word. Don't let the garbage of this world cover up the truths of God. Now as I get off my little soap box here, we need to point people to Jesus Christ according to what the Word of God has to say. The Word of God is sufficient for us today, just as it was in Paul's day. Don't be fooled by the lies that the so-called professionals try to tell you. God knows what is best for us and He has given it to us! May we obey and may we warn the people of the dangers that our out there apart from Christ and His Word!

VERSES 10-16

1. God kept reaching out to His people in love and when they refused to listen He chastened them. But instead of turning to the Lord they kept mocking Him, putting Him down, ignoring the Words of God that were spoken by the prophets of God.

But now they are seeing all that the prophets of God said coming to pass before their very eyes, and they saw it as a hopeless situation for them. They were ready to just give up and die! How sad a perspective of God they had developed. And, tragically, many today feel the same way.

But as we look at verse 11 we see the heart of God, that He gets no pleasure in the death of the wicked and thus, turn from your wickedness, turn to Him! That is God's desire but it is man's choice!

And here is the reality because many people have a misconception about what God does. You may hear them say that God sends people to Hell but that is not exactly true! Man goes there by choice. God is pleading with man to turn from his sinful ways so that he may live, but if they refuse, they will die in their sins!

Jesus said in Matthew 18:11, "**For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.**" You see, He comes looking for us. And as John 3:36 tells us, "**He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**"

God has done everything possible to save man, He sent His Son to pay the penalty for our sins and if we reject that we will die in our sins and we only have ourselves to blame for where we will spend eternity!

2. Now as you look at verses 12-16 you may come to the conclusion that our salvation is based upon our good works and thus, our salvation is not secured. You have to continue to walk in righteousness, walking your way to heaven. And if you don't you will die in your sins! There is no security in that theology!

In verse 13 it speaks about trusting in our own righteousness and that will never work. Why is that? Because the only righteousness that God will accept is perfection. None of us can attain that. In fact, James tells us, “**For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.**” Thus, you could not keep the entire Law. The Law was to show us our sin and show us our need for a Savior!

Secondly, once we are in Christ we are saved forever! Now I am not speaking of pretenders, or counterfeits, but those who sincerely have come to Christ. You see, our good works don't get us into heaven, it is all predicated upon Christ's finished work.

Paul makes that very clear in Ephesians 2:8-9, when he said, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**” So if you have done nothing to get saved but receive the free gift of God by faith I don't believe you can do anything to cause you to lose your salvation because then our salvation is based upon our faithfulness and not God's!

But what about this righteousness, this perfection that God requires of us, how can we attain it? We can't but we can receive it by faith as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**” He took our sin and gave us His righteousness and that is how we can enter into the Kingdom of God!

3. Then what about where it talks of doing what is right, restores his pledge, gives back what he has stolen? Isn't that talking about our righteousness? Not at all, it is speaking of what flows from the life of a person who has returned to God. These things should flow from our lives, not for salvation but as evidence for our faith, these things identify us with Christ!

VERSES 17-20

1. We still hear these things today, that God is not fair, His way is not fair, it is just too hard!

First of all He did all the work; all we must do is receive this gift by faith. Now some may say,

“But what about the Aborigines in Australia, or the Pygmies in Africa, how can God judge them if they have not heard of Jesus?” Make no mistake about it, God is absolutely fair!

Remember what the Psalmist said in Psalm 96:13, “**For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.**” And in Psalm 98:9 we read, “**For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity.**”

However God is going to deal with these issues will be fair, it will be right. Even nature itself declares the glory of God and if you seek Him God will reveal Himself to you no matter where you are at. I think the bigger issue is, “What have you done with the truths of God that you have heard?”

You see, you are accountable for what you know. When you stand before the creator of heaven and earth you will be asked only one question, “What have you done with My Son, Jesus Christ?” And you are not going to respond by saying, “But, what about . . .?” You sins will be before you and you will be cast out of His presence for eternity. God is fair, make no mistake about it!

VERSES 21-22

1. This takes us back to what happened in Ezekiel chapter 24. You remember the story, God told Ezekiel that he was to speak to the people all day long, and then, when evening came his wife, the one who was the desire of his life, the one he loved dearly, was going to die. And in her death he was not to mourn over her as an example of what was to happen to Jerusalem, the place that the Jews loved dearly.

Now after Ezekiel spoke these words to the people we see that God makes him a mute, he was unable to speak forth the Words of God to them anymore, and this lasted 3 years. Yes, Ezekiel did speak judgments against the Gentile nations that surrounded Israel, but to the people of God he was silent for those 3 years.

But now someone came from Jerusalem to let Ezekiel know that the city is destroyed, they broke through the walls. This occurred some 5 months earlier and he had to travel some 700 miles or so to get to Babylon. And as news arrives about what took place, God opens Ezekiel's mouth to once again speak forth the truths of God to the Jewish people.

VERSES 23-26

1. In 586 B. C., during the third and final siege against Jerusalem, the Babylonians leveled the city and took most of the people into captivity, only leaving a few in the land. And the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, placed Gedaliah as governor over these people.

But those Jews who remained in the land were wicked; the good ones were taken captive to Babylon for the most part because God was not done with them. He was going to do a mighty work in them and bring them back into the land once again. But the wicked ones who remained in the land killed Gedaliah, the one whom Nebuchadnezzar placed in charge and now the people are worried that the King will come after them and destroy them.

So they come running to Jeremiah asking him to seek God's counsel on this matter, what they should do. Either remain in the land or flee down to Egypt. And as Jeremiah comes to them he tells them to remain in the land, don't flee down to Egypt. And you think great, they finally are seeking God's counsel in their lives.

But their response is strange. They basically tell Jeremiah, "God didn't speak to you! You are a liar!" How frustrating that must have been for Jeremiah. Speaking forth the Words of God to his people for 46 years and even though all that Jeremiah said came to pass they refused to listen and obey.

They fled to Egypt and were destroyed by the Babylonians when they came down upon the Egyptians, just as God had said. These rebels were saying they would take over this land again, for if Abraham being one person inherited it how much more we should since we are many! But their rebellion drove them out and finally destroyed them! Their pride and immorality brought them down!

VERSES 27-29

1. What God is doing here is purging the land of the wickedness that permeated it and He will then bring home a faithful remnant to start a new work in and through them.

VERSES 30-33

1. All this devastation has come upon Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom of Judah and now the people who mocked Ezekiel, refused to listen to him, laughed at him have seen all that he spoke of come to pass before their eyes!

They recognized that he is a prophet of God and because of what he said and how it came to pass they wanted to hear Ezekiel! Now it was a popular thing to do! It was entertaining. It was a big social event. If you didn't go something was wrong with you. So they loved to hear what Ezekiel was saying. But it never moved their hearts. It never changed their lives.

James gives us this warning in James 1:22-25, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”** It is not only hearing the Word of God but the application of the Word of God to our lives!

During the time of Wesley and Whitefield, they had huge gatherings. They would set up their soap box or whatever and begin to speak and crowds would gather from all around. And you read stuff like that and you wonder why we don't see that today? Interestingly enough, during that period of time, the people loved to hear people speak. They loved the way people would articulate a message. Tragically, many of those people never let the message sink deep into their heart. There was no transformation taking place, only a building up of knowledge, which only puffs up and eventually explodes.

Churches are filled with people who like to hear what is being spoken. Week after week they come in and they go out but nothing changes in their lives. They may say, “Great message!” But the reality is, they should be saying, “God spoke to me, He pierced my heart, I must do something about it!”

May God’s Word go forth in power and change people’s lives. If you don’t allow it to, you will be swept away by the winds of doctrine that come blowing through the church. God’s Word is going forth, what are you doing with it? And I guess, as a pastor, you can say that I have come to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable! It is as Isaiah 55:11 says, “**So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.**” May you allow God, by His Spirit, to transform your life!

2. Next time we will begin the last division of this book, the future restoration of Israel and it covers Ezekiel chapters 34 through 48. Some powerful lessons and we see the faithfulness of God to bring His people back home.