

Ezek. 3:1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

Ezek. 3:2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

Ezek. 3:3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

This chapter begins with Ezekiel eating the book as commanded. This is a statement of Ezekiel's obedience and willingness to accept his commission. This is a symbolic description of the Lord putting the very words into Ezekiel that He wanted shared with the people of Israel.

I have already made the comparison to John's experience in the previous chapter and the fact that God's word is always sweet to the taste of those who love Him.

Ezek. 3:4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

I think emphasis is being given to the fact that Ezekiel was to go give the message to the people only after he had digested and understood it himself. This verse also emphasizes the fact that Ezekiel is speaking God's words—not his own.

Ezek. 3:5 For thou *art* not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, *but* to the house of Israel;

Ezek. 3:6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.

Ezek. 3:7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hardhearted.

These are thought-provoking verses. The Lord seems to be saying that those who should be able to understand the purpose of the message and the Authority behind it would choose to disregard it in their pride and arrogance. He indicates that heathen nations would respond to His message more readily than His own people.

That gives thought for introspection today regarding the body of Christ. The Lord is just as faithful today. I know He is chastising and rebuking through the ministry of the Spirit in the body of believers, and I can't help but wonder why we are not becoming more effective and powerful in ministry. Is it because many of us are falling victim to deception and pride? Have we just become apathetic and content with the status quo? I am often inspired and amazed at the zeal and courage of the faith of believers who turn to Christ from predominantly "heathen" nations as I read "The Voice of the Martyrs Newsletter" every week. Why don't we share the gospel with that same zeal?

Ezek. 3:8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.

Ezek. 3:9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.

As I continue to read this account, I am reminded of the meaning of Ezekiel's name—"God will strengthen." Although Ezekiel will still be subject to human responses, the Lord is assuring him that he will receive divine empowerment to stand strong and bold as he prophesies before the rebellious, stubborn house of Israel. He has nothing to fear from them.

I think that is an important principle for the person of faith. We have to nothing to fear in choosing to obey God. He will empower and protect us as we follow Him in faith and obedience.

Ezek. 3:10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.

This is an interesting verse. You would think it would read to hear and then to receive. Spiritual *hearing*, however, is only possible when the heart is willing to listen. The Psalmist expresses it this way.

Psa. 10:17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

Jesus expressed the same thought.

Matt. 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

It would seem that spiritual hearing and seeing are directly influenced by the condition of the heart.

Ezek. 3:11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

As is often the case in scripture, the message is being repeated. The Lord is telling Ezekiel to take action, to go now and deliver God's message. The prophet is reminded again that his responsibility to deliver the message is not mitigated in any way by how the people receive it. (9/06) We should have that same mindset in spreading God's truth today.

Ezek. 3:12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.

Ezek. 3:13 I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

Again, after God commands, He enables. As Ezekiel moves to obey, he hears a voice of praise to God as the cherubim begin to move away seemingly transporting, but at least accompanying the throne of God. The fact that Ezekiel describes this through *hearing* indicates that his vision had ended.

Ezek. 3:14 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.

Again, reference is made to the fact that the Spirit is empowering Ezekiel to obey. God provides all that is needed for obedience to those whom He commissions.

It's interesting that we are told that Ezekiel was not happy as he set off to deliver God's message to the people. The Hebrew indicates that he was angry. Was he angry at the people or angry that he had been chosen for such a difficult task?

Ezek. 3:15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

When Ezekiel arrives at the designated settlement at which he was to begin delivering God's message, he sat down stunned and unaware of activity around him. He was obviously not happy. He stayed that way for seven days. In previous studies, such as in Job, I have learned that seven days is a normal time of mourning for the dead. It's interesting that the Lord allowed Ezekiel a time of mourning as he prepared to deliver a very difficult message. He knew that the message had impacted Ezekiel as severely as the death of a loved one would. It also gave the people an opportunity to observe that Ezekiel was seriously disturbed about something.

Ezek. 3:16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 3:17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

After the seven days of inaction, the LORD instructs Ezekiel to deliver His message. He tells Ezekiel that he has been appointed a *watchman* for the house of Israel. A *watchman* is one who serves as a guard to warn of approaching danger. This is a position of great responsibility.

Ezek. 3:18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Ezek. 3:19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

These verses describe the importance of Ezekiel's position as a watchman. If Ezekiel fails to deliver God's message and one who has rejected the Lord dies in his sins, Ezekiel will be held accountable for that man's death. If, however, Ezekiel delivers God message faithfully, and an unbeliever dies, Ezekiel will be absolved of any responsibility for that death and ensures preservation of his own life. The Hebrew for *soul* references "a breathing creature."

God is not holding Ezekiel accountable for anyone's eternal destiny. Scripture is clear that the *individual* is responsible for choosing to follow God in faith or not. The use of the word blood in particular emphasizes that it is physical life being referenced. Blood is equated with physical life in the scripture; it is not a part of the spiritual life that is ours for eternity.

Lev. 17:11 For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood:

1Cor. 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Ezek. 3:20 Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Ezek. 3:21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

These verses are harder. They are the opposite side of the coin to the previous two verses. The difficulty for me comes with the phrase, "I lay a stumblingblock before him." I think the Lord is talking about a person who has known God's truth and been obedient to it, but chooses for some reason to reject that truth and embrace a sinful life again. At some point God gives him over to his sin and he dies in that condition. It is Ezekiel's responsibility to warn that individual to repent and turn back to God. If Ezekiel does not deliver God's warning, God will hold Ezekiel guilty of murder so to speak and will require his life in return. As long as he is faithful to deliver God's message, his life is under God's protection.

These are hard verses to process. The important truth is that God holds each one of us accountable for our response to Him. A truth that is just as important is that God holds His servants accountable for their obedience to Him. You could reason that death holds no fear for the child of God, and that is true. A life cut short because of disobedience, however, is a life that has lost opportunity to earn eternal rewards.

Another thing to remember is that Ezekiel is ministering to a people who were living under the law. They did not possess the "earnest" of the Holy Spirit that we in the body of Christ have to secure our inheritance.

Eph. 1:13 ... ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession....

Ezek. 3:22 And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

Ezek. 3:23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face.

After receiving such a grave and serious message regarding his responsibility, Ezekiel felt the Spirit or power of the Lord upon him, and he was told to go meet the LORD in the plain, a place where they could commune in private. Ezekiel immediately obeys. He is again given a vision of the LORD in His glory like the one he first experienced by the river of Chebar. Ezekiel again prostrates himself before the LORD.

Ezek. 3:24 Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house.

Ezekiel can obviously tell a difference from the Spirit being upon him and within him. He senses the presence of the Spirit in him as he is lifted to his feet and speaks to him. He is told to go home, close the doors and stay there.

(9/06) As I was reading over this section again, I thought about how the Spirit makes His presence in us known. Ezekiel was literally picked up and put on his feet before hearing an audible voice. We are privileged to have the Spirit indwelling us at all times. He doesn't make His entrance and/or presence known in such a dramatic fashion, but He does give us evidence of His presence in our lives.

- By the fruit He produces in our lives.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal. 5:23 Meekness, temperance...

Eph. 5:9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

- By affirming us as children of God and encouraging us to cry out to our Father for comfort.

Rom. 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

- By the gifts He gives us.

1Cor. 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

1Cor. 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

1Cor. 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

1Cor. 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

1Cor. 12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

- By our love for each other.

1Pet. 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently:

1John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

- By empowering us to keep the commandments of God.
1John 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.
- By embracing the truth that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth as a man, the Messiah, the Savior.
1John 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

1John 4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

1John 4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

Ezek. 3:25 But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them:

This verse is worded to make it sound like Ezekiel is going to be tied up with ropes by the people. I don't think that fits in with the direction for Ezekiel to lock himself inside his house. I refuse to get hung up on this point. The emphasis is on the fact that Ezekiel is not to go out among the people with God's message at this time. (cf 4:8)

Ezek. 3:26 And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they *are* a rebellious house.

The LORD is going to cause Ezekiel to be unable to speak and declare God's warning to them at this time.

Ezek. 3:27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they *are* a rebellious house.

Point is being made that it is God Who will determine the appropriate time for His message to be delivered. Ezekiel is to be the submissive servant and act according to God's instructions. Obviously, he will not be held accountable for anyone's life during a time when God has taken away his ability to speak. Once God opens Ezekiel's mouth, the people will be held accountable for their response to the message.