

Turn! • Eze. 33:1-11

INTRODUCTION • Read vs. 1-6

1. One of the most important assignments a soldier can be given is sentry-duty.
  - a. Usually posted on the perimeter of a base or fortification, they stand or patrol; keeping an eye out for any hint of a threat.
  - b. Throughout history, **literally thousands** of battles have been determined by how well a single sentry performed his task.
    - 1) If alert, he was able to raise the alarm that an enemy approached.
    - 2) If asleep or distracted, he missed the stealthy approach of the enemy, was the first to die, & the base was overrun.
      - a) The mighty City of Babylon fell to the Persians because the watchmen thought her walls impregnable.
      - b) Mountain-top Sardis fell to the enemy – **twice**, because her sentries drank too much & left their post.
  - c. This is why throughout history, a sentry caught sleeping was immediately executed.
  - d. The threat of that punishment tends to keep people awake.
2. Before the modern era, w/weapons like cannons & guns that hurl projectiles at the enemy at great distance,
  - a. Back when it was swords & spears; fighting was face to face,
  - b. Cities were protected by high, thick walls that kept the enemy out.
  - c. But as cities grew, w/no more room *inside* the walls, people built *outside*.
  - d. They depended on watchmen who stood on top of the wall & in towers to warn them if an enemy approached.
  - e. When they heard the sound of the trumpet, they gathered their things & beat it as fast as possible inside the gates.
    - 1) If they were working in the fields & heard the trumpet, they dropped their tools & ran.
    - 2) Anyone who failed to heed the trumpet's call was a fool.
    - 3) He'd be caught outside the walls & slain.
3. God uses an illustration everyone in Ezekiel's day was quite familiar with.
4. He speaks about the **Duty of the Watchman**.
  - a. If he sees danger approaching & sounds the alarm; those who fail to heed it can't blame the watchman; he **did** his job.
  - b. But if he sees danger & does nothing, he's responsible for the lives of all those he could have saved – **IF** he'd only **done** his duty.
5. All of this is applied **to Ezekiel**: He IS a watchman . . .

Vs. 7-9

<sup>7</sup> “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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.

1. The danger here is God's righteous judgment of sin. It's coming!
2. Ezekiel's duty was to warn of it; that even now it was on its way.
  - a. He was to say if people would repent; fleeing to the safety of God's forgiveness, they'd be saved.
  - b. But if not, they'd perish.
3. The challenge to Ezekiel was **Would** he sound the alarm? Would he warn people of their peril?
4. As we read this 2500 years later, it seems obvious; Why wouldn't he?
  - a. Of course he'd warn them. He was a prophet of God & knew that dark days were ahead.
  - b. But the very presence of this challenge God gives Ezekiel means **he needed it**.
  - c. He WAS wavering, debating whether or not he should announce to the public the message God had given him.
5. Why the hesitation? What moved him to consider holding back?
  - a. I mean—this is ch. 33; we're already far into his years as a prophet.

- b. He's been announcing God's judgment for a long time already.
  - c. That's the point! He's weary. The watchman is tired. The sentry's been on duty for a long time.
  - d. And he's tired of the same dark, dour message of impending doom.
6. So God reminds him that this is the watchman's burden & the responsibility is great.
7. It's not difficult to empathize w/Ezekiel when we realize we're called to **precisely** the same ministry & message.
- a. Judgment **is** coming! Sin & sinners are going to face the wrath of God.
  - b. But there's safety; refuge in Christ. If people will repent of their sin & flee to His forgiveness – they can be saved.
8. This is the **Gospel** Christians & the Church are called by God to faithfully proclaim.
- a. This is the Good news that the bad news of sin undoes.
  - b. And like Ezekiel, the people of God have been faithfully declaring it for a LONG time.
  - c. Because of that, & because as in Ezekiel's day, there are many who don't want to hear it, we can be tempted to sit on it, to pull back, withdraw, go silent.
  - d. We know people **don't want to hear** about judgment;
  - e. Don't want to hear they're sinners who stand in peril of God's wrath.
  - f. We know if we open our mouths & say that, they're going to get angry & argue or tell us to shut up.
  - g. They'll get that disgusted look on their face that we've yet again brought up a taboo subject.
  - h. It's not **polite** to tell someone they're a sinner. The PC police have **banned** the word.
9. I'm guessing every born again, follower of Jesus in this room today knows that they're supposed to be part of His **ongoing mission** to win the lost to faith in Him.
- a. We too are watchmen & women; called to raise the alarm that judgment's coming.
  - b. We're to call sinners to the safety of God's forgiveness in Christ.
  - c. But that we all, to one degree or another, know the hesitation Ezekiel faced.
  - d. We too need these words. We need to be reminded that there is no hope for the lost but Jesus.
    - 1) Psychotherapy can't help them.
    - 2) Medication can't save them.
    - 3) Government bailouts & healthcare won't deliver them.
  - e. The only solution to sin is salvation; and salvation comes only thru faith in Jesus who died & rose.
10. Do you believe that? Are you announcing it?
- a. Have you told your family/ relatives?
  - b. Neighbors?
  - c. Fellows workers?
  - d. Friends?

Vs. 10-11

<sup>10</sup> "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins *lie* upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"'

- 1. Ezekiel shook off his hesitation & sounded the alarm as he was supposed to.
- 2. Here's how the people replied; "It's too late!

Our sin is too great.

Forgiveness sounds good but surely we're too far gone to be saved.

We're resigned to our doom."

- 3. There's a subtle undertone in the Hebrew here the translation misses.
  - a. They're not only resigned to their fate, they suggest that that's really what God wanted to do to them anyway.
  - b. They thought He took pleasure in pouring wrath on them.
- 4. So He tells Ezekiel ...

<sup>11</sup> Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God,

- a. He **takes an oath** based on His own eternal existence as God.
- b. There's no more solemn promise than this -

'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

- 5. What delights God is repentance & salvation – NOT judgment; not wrath.

- a. Jesus said the angels in heaven break out in celebration when a single sinner repents.
  - b. So God pleads with them to turn from their sin; which is what repentance means.
6. Why die in sin when they can live in faith in Him?
7. That simple query of God here, “Why?” challenged the resignation to sin in v. 10.
- a. They weren’t in fact helpless victims trapped by sin.
  - b. As much as they might blame their circumstances, the only thing that kept them shackled to sin was their choice; their will.

#### The Hole

1. Once upon a time, a man fell in a hole.
2. It was deep & the walls were steep.
  - a. He couldn’t climb his way out, though he tried for days.
  - b. Each day he got weaker & weaker.
3. Some people came by & laughed at him, calling him a fool for falling in.
4. Then a man came by & instead of making fun of him, encouraged him to try climbing out again.
5. Another came along & tossed down a self-help book; *How to Get Out of Your Hole*.
  - a. He read it & tried the techniques he found there, but they didn’t work.
6. An Eastern guru came along, dressed in a saffron colored robe.
  - a. He crouched down at the top of the hole & told the man in it the hole wasn’t real; if he’d just meditate, he could lift himself out of there.
  - b. So he meditated & meditated and intoned the sacred “Om” – & stayed in the hole.
7. Yet another man threw him some wood and suggested he make a ladder. But gave him no nails or hammer.
8. Another tossed down a rope, & the man in the hole realized this might really be it. So he grabbed the rope & tried to climb out, but by now he was far too weak to lift himself.
9. Finally, he cried out – “Someone please help!”
  - a. He looked up and saw a man climbing down the rope, into the pit.
  - b. When he reached the bottom, he turned around & introduced Himself.
  - c. “My name is Jesus. Would you like me to rescue you?”
  - d. The man gladly said yes, So Jesus hoisted him over his shoulders, took hold of the rope & climbed quickly out of the hole.
10. We’ve all fallen into a hole called sin.
  - a. We can’t by good works climb our way out.
  - b. Neither classical philosophy not self-help pop psychology can rescue us.
  - c. Man-made religion won’t help.
  - d. Only Jesus can save us.
11. He left the glory of Heaven, descended into this sin-sick, sorry world – and now stands before us asking – Do you want to be saved?
12. How foolish to decline His offer.