

Through the Bible - Ezekiel

by Zac Poonen

God's sovereignty and covenant with us are essential for effective ministry, and we must wait on Him and be prepared for the ministry He has planned.

Duration: 56:57

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Serving God", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of serving God regardless of our feelings or desires. He describes a vision in which four living beings with different faces symbolize strength, service, heavenly nature, and humanity. The preacher encourages believers to be fully devoted to God, surrendering everything to Him. He also highlights the connection between pride, laziness, gluttony, and sexual sin, urging young people to address these areas in order to overcome sexual temptation. Additionally, the preacher discusses how God used Ezekiel as an object lesson to demonstrate His punishment on Jerusalem and the people of Israel.

Transcript

Today we turn to Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a man who was deeply influenced by Jeremiah, at least for 25 years. He was in Babylon.

You know, God had told his people, you have to be punished, accept this judgment I'm sending upon you, submit to the King of Babylon and go. He tried for more than 40 years, as we saw through Jeremiah, to save them from going to Babylon, but they would not listen. And finally, he said, well, now the best thing for you is to accept the chastening.

See, God does not want to chasten us. Jesus never had to be chastened. Paul would never have needed a thorn in the flesh unless he was in danger of spiritual pride.

Chastening is when he sees that we are going astray or have gone astray. And when that happens, the best thing to do is to submit to the chastening. So he told the people, if you go to Babylon, I'll bless you, accept the chastening for 70 years, accept the discipline.

And a lot of people went, some were forced to go. But there, God gave them prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel. See, that's a great encouragement.

The prophets were not only in when they were in Judah, that there in that distant land, God loved them, sent them prophets, even in a time of discipline and backsliding, God still sends his prophets to speak to us. He does not forsake us. And in verse 1 we read of Ezekiel, we read in verse 3 that he was the son of a priest and he was training to be a priest.

But in the 30th year, when he was 30 years old, verse 1, God called him to be a prophet. We may plan our life to have a certain ministry and God may call us to something totally different. And then we must be willing like Ezekiel to drop whatever God has called us to.

Actually, the life of a priest was much safer than the life of a prophet. Priests were not usually killed, prophets were. And a prophet had a very tough time, because God's hand was very heavy on a prophet most of the time and he had to suffer a lot, as Ezekiel did suffer.

He would not have suffered like that if he were a priest. There are certain ministries in God's kingdom, which involve more suffering than others. You know, the Lord told Peter that you're going to stretch out your hands and somebody's going to carry you where you don't like to go.

And when we suffer, the temptation is to look at other people like Peter looked at John and said, what about him? And the Lord says, that's none of your business. You just follow me. If God calls you to a ministry which involves suffering, my advice to you is don't look at anybody else.

Don't worry about them. Ezekiel responded immediately and thank God he responded. If he had not responded, we would never have heard of him.

If Hudson Taylor had not responded when God called him to go to China, if C.T. Studd had not responded when God called him to Africa, we'd never have heard of them. If Jim Elliott had not responded when he was called to go to South America, we'd never have heard of him. And we'd never have heard of Ezekiel.

Yeah, they responded as soon as God called them. And the 30th year seems to be very significant. Joseph was 30 when he became ruler in Egypt.

David was 30. Ezekiel was 30. Jesus was 30, both in the Old and the New Testaments.

And I think most of the apostles were around 30 when they started their ministry. And that gives me an indication that that's around the age God wants to pick us up and to fulfill a ministry through us. But prior to that, he spends years in preparing us for a ministry.

And if you allow God to prepare you during the years prior to your coming to that age of ministry, then you can be ready by the time you're 30 or 35. You can be ready for a ministry God has planned for you. But a lot of young people are impatient.

Now, I'm not saying we cannot go out and serve God. You can serve God when you're 16. Sure.

But in the early years, God has to keep you under authority. And a lot of young people chafe under that authority. And so they never in their whole life come into a ministry.

I'm sure Ezekiel in his younger days submitted to the prophecy of Jeremiah and listened to it, studied it. And God saw the faithfulness of this young man and said, you're not going to be a priest, you're going to be my prophet. And it says here, the heavens were open over him and he saw visions of God.

And the Lord gave him a message. The heavens were open and it says the hand of the Lord was upon him. Now, that's an expression that comes seven times in Ezekiel, the hand of the Lord upon him.

It meant that he could not do what he wanted. It's like God says, you got to go where I want you to go. Now, if we can live like this all our life, with the heavens open over us all the time.

And that's very easy if you keep your conscience clear and you humble yourself by humility and the fear of the Lord. The heavens can always be open over you and you allow the hand of the Lord to be upon you, even when he takes you where you don't like to go. You see certain times in chapter three, for example, the hand of the Lord was upon him and he went in the heat of his spirit.

He didn't want to go, but he went because he was submitted to God. A true servant of God does not live by feelings. It's not a question of whether I feel like going.

Feeling like going is for those who serve themselves. Those who serve God go whether they feel like going or don't feel like going. They move by the hand of the Lord and the message of God.

In verse four onwards, he gives us a description of this vision that he saw. And just a few things I want to mention in this vision. There were four living beings that came out of that cloud in verse five and each of them had four faces.

And those four faces were those of a lion, verse 10, a human face in the front, a lion, an ox and an eagle. Now, we don't know exactly what these mean, but we see something of that in Revelation 2. Perhaps we could refer to it like this, that the lion speaks of strength, power, authority. The ox speaks of service.

The eagle speaks of being heavenly. And the man speaks of, in spite of all this, being very human. And you could relate this also to the various aspects of Christ.

But these are characteristics certainly that need to be found in all of God's servants. I just mentioned that in passing. Now, the point I want you to notice here is about this vision where he saw wheels on the ground, verse 15.

The wheels were moving along with the spirit. It says in verse 20, the spirit of the four living beings was in the wheels. Wherever the spirit went, the wheels and the living beings went to.

When the living beings moved, the wheels moved. The living beings stopped, the wheels stopped. When the living beings flew, the wheels rose up.

And it speaks here of wheels within wheels in verse 16. Each wheel had a second wheel turning crosswise within it. And that means going this way or going this way.

And this is a picture of the sovereign working of God in the circumstances that come across our life. The circumstances we encounter, whether it's in this direction or this direction, wherever we go, there's a sovereign working of God. And the Holy Spirit works through these circumstances.

When the spirit went, the wheels went. That's what it says. Wherever the spirit went, the wheels also went.

So the Holy Spirit is the one who controls the circumstances of our life. This is, I believe, one of the most important things that we need to recognize in these last days. The sovereignty of God over all circumstances, whether the wheels are going north, south or east, west.

It makes no difference. One wheel goes this way, one wheel goes that way. But it's a sovereign working of God in it all.

Wherever you go, you'll find the sovereign working of God from north to south, from east to west. You remember Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me. Therefore, go into and make disciples of all nations.

Now, today that has been changed by preachers who say people are dying in sin. Therefore, go into all nations. That's not what Jesus said.

Jesus never said people are dying in sin. Therefore, go into all nations. He said, all authority is given to me in heaven and earth.

Matthew 28, 18. Therefore, go into all nations. If I went out to serve the Lord because I believe there is a need, in my case, okay, I'm a teacher and I feel there's a need for a teaching ministry.

So I go here, there and everywhere. I'm going to become a nervous wreck like a lot of Christian workers have become. I don't do that.

I say, Lord, you have all authority in heaven and earth and you tell me to go and make disciples, I'll do it. In other words, I'm under that authority. That's the way you are to serve the Lord.

Then you find all circumstances work for your good. But if you wander where you like and do what you like, you may find things don't work out exactly as God wanted it or as you would like it to work. So here we see of a life led by the spirit.

That is a truly spiritual life. The eyes of the Lord, it speaks about the eyes of the Lord here. The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the whole earth.

We saw in 2 Chronicles 16, verse 9, working on behalf of those whose hearts are completely His. So we turn now to verse 28. All around this person, around this throne where there was a figure, there was a throne in verse 26, was a glowing halo like a rainbow shining through the clouds.

And this is God's symbol of God's covenant, as we know. If there are two things that we must remember, both are here in this chapter. One is God's sovereignty over all the circumstances of the earth that affect us.

The second is God's covenant symbolized by the rainbow. You must remember God has made an everlasting covenant with us through Jesus Christ. He has said in Hebrews 13, 5 and 6, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

He has made an everlasting covenant with us. That is the basis on which we move. We don't move on the basis of need, human need, although we look at it.

We don't live in fear of human governments or their rules and regulations. We move under the sovereignty of God, believing that we are covenant people. It's so important in these days to remember that.

Let's go to chapter 2. We find, you find here a man who is under God's authority. The Lord says to him, stand up, I want to speak to you. And the spirit came into him as he spoke and set me on my feet.

And he said, listen carefully, I am sending you to the nation of Israel. You know, as we wait upon God, though we may not hear an audible voice like Ezekiel, I believe it is, it's possible to have just as real and as certain a sense of calling and a sense of God sending you as Ezekiel had. It may take time.

Now, when I started my ministry, I did not know immediately what my ministry was going to be. But now, as the years went by, I began to discover it. And as I stuck to that, now, as I look back, I find fulfillment.

But I know so many people who tried to drag me away from the ministry God called me to. The Lord says, I'm sending you with a particular ministry. And it's very important that you learn to wait upon God and to hear God speaking to you and telling you what he has called you for.

Sometimes you can choose God's second best. I remember about 30 years ago when I was in a lot of financial difficulty. I didn't have much at that time.

A Christian organization invited me to be its director and offered me a lot of earthly advantages. If I joined it was a Western organization working in India. And I said, no, I can't do that because even though I'm in need, this is not the ministry God has called me to to sit behind a desk and be an administrator.

God's called me to preach the word. And I'm so thankful I didn't accept that offer. It was like a temptation, not a temptation to sin, a temptation.

Now, if I look back, if I had made that decision 30 years ago, I don't think I'd have gone into sin. I'd have still been doing something for the Lord, but it wouldn't have been God's best. So from these examples of these servants of God in the Bible that we've been considering, I want to encourage you to remember and to consider the fact that God has a specific task for you.

And it's wonderful to realize it when you're young. Wait on the Lord and say, Lord, show me that. And once you've shown it to me, it won't become clear in one day or a period of years.

It'll become more and more clear. And as it becomes clear to you, stick to it and you won't have any regret when you come to the end of life. And the Lord told him, and there are some things here which are specific for those who are called for a preaching ministry.

Son of man, verse six, don't be afraid of them. You notice that I mentioned that before, how very frequently in the prophets, this word comes. Don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid. Even though their threats are sharp as thorns. What a word for people who are serving the Lord in Northern India and other difficult places today.

Do not fear them. Don't be afraid. Even though their threats are sharp as thorns, bobbed like briars.

And even though their threats sting like scorpions. I'm reading from the new living translation. Don't be dismayed by their dark skulls on their faces.

Remember they are rebels. Israel was like this when, when Ezekiel prophesied, they scowled at them, scowled at him and threatened him and threatened to kill him and all types of things. Every prophet faced this.

And these prophets whom you read off in the Bible were facing the very same things that a lot of God's servants are facing today. And their confidence was in the sovereignty of God. And the Lord said to him,

you must give them my messages, whether they listen or not.

It doesn't make a difference. Don't think, don't say, oh, they won't listen. Okay.

They won't listen, but they need to know that a prophet came and told them after that your responsibility is over. That's one of the things that the Lord kept on stressing to Ezekiel. Once you have told them the message, your hands are clean.

Otherwise their blood is on your hands because you didn't tell them what I told you. In chapter three, we read about the, the Lord telling Ezekiel to eat the scroll, eat this first yourself. This message, which is for other people, you must eat yourself first.

So I opened my mouth and he fed me the scroll. He said, eat all of it. Verse three.

And when I ate it, it tasted as sweet as honey. Now you find in revelation, the Lord told John also to do the same thing. And after eating it, he said, now you can go and prophesy.

See, this is a principle in ministry of the word that that word, which God wants to speak through you to other people, God wants to speak to you first. You who teach that others should not steal. Is there any area in your life where you're stealing something? For example, when you speak evil about somebody, you're stealing a man's reputation.

Do you recognize that as stealing or do you recognize only stealing a hundred rupees as stealing? Gossiping is stealing a man's reputation. That's what it says. You who preach that other people should not steal.

Do you steal? You who preach that other people should not commit adultery. Do you commit adultery? Do you lust with your eyes? So the message, if it's not, if I don't eat the scroll first, God is not going to anoint my ministry. I can still get up and preach.

There are multitudes of preachers today who are preaching without eating the scroll. If you want an effective ministry, eat the scroll first. The word of God is like a two-edged sword.

One edge is to cut me and the other edge only I can use to cut the other. If it does not cut me, it's no use trying to cut the other person. You will be a hard, unmerciful, useless Pharisee of a preacher.

So eating the scroll is very important. Called by God, anointed by God, the hand of God upon him, eating the scroll, this is how God prepared this man to serve him. And he told him in chapter 3 verse 14, it says, the spirit lifted me up and took me away and I went in bitterness and turmoil, but the hand of the Lord upon me was strong.

Sometimes when we have to go somewhere, we may not have feelings of excitement and joy like we have when we go to other places. It may be feelings of turmoil in our heart. Paul speaks in 2nd Corinthians 7 about fighting outside and fears within.

Paul had fear, but he still went. So don't go by feelings. If you go by feelings, you'll never go where the Lord wants you to go.

I remember once when I was waiting in the railway station in Bangalore many years ago to take a train to go somewhere for ministry and some of my children were sick. I had to leave them at home with my wife

and I knew I had to go to this place and I thought there, what shall I do? Shall I cancel my trip and go home? And the word that came to me was, whatever decision you take, don't take it on the basis of fear. You can take a decision to go home if you like, but don't take it on the basis of fear.

Fear, oh what will happen to my children when I go away? And I learned a lesson that day and I didn't go home. The Lord took care of my children. Now I'm not saying you should do that always.

Sometimes God may tell you to go home and help your wife. So don't follow this rule. What I say is, whatever decision you take, take it in faith, not in fear, never.

In faith you say, no I think I should, this is not so important. I think it's more important to help my wife. Go home.

That may be right in certain situations, particularly if your wife is worn out, is not able to cope. But sometimes the situation may be that the devil is preventing you from fulfilling an effective ministry. So don't go by feeling.

Sometimes when the spirit lifts us up and takes us away, we go with turmoil, but we go. That's what we learned from this passage. And when you come to verse 23, you see there, so I got up and I saw the glory of the Lord just as I seen it first and I fell face down in the dust.

Here's another important principle. See, it's more important to understand these principles of serving God than just studying a lot of scriptures. Put your face in the dust always.

Sometimes it's good to physically do that, to lie down on the floor in your room alone before God and say, Lord, this is where I rightfully belong. This is what I am, a nobody in your eyes. You know, I tell you, my brothers and sisters, we who preach and stand up in front of others, we are in tremendous danger because so many people admire us, exalt us, that we more than anybody else need to get alone before God and lie down flat and recognize what we are before God.

What can we say? God can take away our breath in a moment. He can take away our anointing in a moment. I live in fear of that every day of my life.

I say, Lord, I never want to lose my anointing. I don't want to lose it for money. I don't want to lose it for a small slip up of conscience.

I don't want to lose it for anything. Keep your face in the dust. A wonderful example.

And a man who lives like that, it says the spirit came into him and set him up on his feet. It's good when the spirit falls upon us and lifts us up. And he talked to me and said, go shut yourself in your house.

There you'll be bound with ropes so you cannot go out among the people. I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so you won't be able to pray for them and you won't be able to speak. Whenever I give you a message, I'll loosen your tongue and let you speak.

And then you say, this is what the Lord says. Some will listen, some will ignore you. It doesn't make a difference.

It's wonderful to live like this before God. God says, now don't go. Don't speak.

Then don't speak. The Lord says, I'll tell you when to speak. And then you speak.

My brothers and sisters, can you hear the Holy Spirit? Or do you go by reason? Reason says it's always right to speak. The Holy Spirit says sometimes it's not. Sometimes you should keep quiet.

Learn to live by the Spirit. This is what I see in Ezekiel. He's a man who lived by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We see here in chapter 4 now, through a number of signs, the Lord teaches Ezekiel. He first asked him to make a clay tablet and then asked him to lie down on one side for 390 days and then asked him to lie down on the other side for 40 days, each symbolizing he was an object lesson to the people of Judah, for the people of Israel who were in Babylon, showing them how God was punishing Jerusalem and the people of Israel and Judah. It was, he was a living demonstration.

He wasn't just preaching it. He was demonstrating it by his life. The Lord asked him to do some amazing things like cooking food with dung and to cut off his, to shave his, verse 5, his head, chapter 5, sorry, chapter 5, verse 1, to shave his head and his beard and to keep just a little bit of that hair with him, verse 4, to show that only a few people in Israel, a remnant alone, will be saved.

So you see, if you become a prophet, you have to forget about all your good looks and all that. You, you, if God tells you to shave your head, you shave your head. You don't go and say, well, Lord, that won't make me look nice.

A person who's worried about, you know, he had to cook his food on dung, make simple food. See, a prophet, it would have been far easier if he was a priest. But when he was a prophet, he had to be disciplined in his eating habits, disciplined in his appearance.

He had not, he could not be bothered about what people thought about him. God was sovereign. Don't ever complain about anything in your appearance or anything to God.

God has sovereignly determined every little thing in your life. It's absolutely true. I remember when I was a young man of about 22 and I started preaching God's word, I started losing my hair.

It wasn't as bad as this, but it was still pretty much had gone. I was 22 and I never prayed that I would get hair on my head. And I began to think there must be a reason why God has allowed this.

And I, I got light on it. I found everything was related to my ministry for the Lord. You see, when I would get up to speak, because I'd lost so much hair, people thought I was 30, 35 years old.

And so they listened to me. If they, if they knew that I was only 22, they said, Oh, we'll wait for the next preacher. So I saw that God had a purpose, even in something like that.

So it may not be like that in your life, but I just want to tell you that any little thing that happens. If you're, if you're totally sold out for God from your youth, say, Lord, I have no consideration. I'm not interested in food appearance, nothing.

I want to be filled with your Holy spirit. I want to be anointed. I want to be true to that anointing until the end of my life.

I don't want to look at other people. I want to look at Jesus. I want to look at these prophets and I want to follow you.

I tell you, you'll have a wonderful life. God will teach you his word. God will speak to your heart.

He'll give you words to speak to other people, but you have got to be totally sold out for him. You have to have no ambition or desire on earth, not even for honor or acceptance or money or anything. It's all God's your body, your time, your money, your family, everything is God's.

If you're like that, there's no limit to what God can do through you. Okay. Um, in chapter seven, I'm just going to go quickly through some of these chapters in chapter seven, we read a title of the Lord, which most people don't like to hear.

It's called in verse nine, the Lord, the smiter, the one who punishes with judgment in chapter eight, we read of the idolatry that was going on inside the temple. The Lord said, do you want me to show you? The Lord says, I will show you son of man chapter eight, verse six and seven, why I have left these people. And God gave Ezekiel an insight into the secret sins that were going on in the midst of God's people and a true prophet.

God will give him words that expose the sin, which other people cannot see. You know, one Corinthians 14 says you prophesy and a man comes in, who's a total stranger and the secrets of his heart are made manifest. And he says, boy, God is here.

So I believe we should covet such a ministry. If he prophesied that when we speak God's word in a church, people whom we don't know the secrets of their heart are made manifest by the Holy spirit. So God showed Ezekiel, what all was going on inside, how they were weeping.

Verse 14 for the queen of heaven, how they had idols and all engraved inside. You see, this is not evident on the outside. A lot of people who look Holy on the outside are pretty filthy inside.

And the Lord saying, this is supposed to be my temple and see what's going on inside. And that's why it's also says in verse 16, they were worshiping the sun. They were facing eastward verse 16 and worshiping the sun.

Just like many people today face east and worship the sun and chapter nine. We read because of all this, the glory of God, verse three began to move. You see the glory of God.

When it begins to depart, when the anointing, the freshness, the fire has gone, you know, there's a reason you go to some, many churches today, there's no anointing. There's no freshness. There's no fire.

You see, listen to many preachers today and you could hear them 20 years ago. There was an anointing upon them. It's not there today.

Actually, the anointing on your life should increase as you grow older. But with most people I've seen in my life, preachers in this country, it decreases usually because they get corrupted with money or compromise or begin to speak in a way to please people. Don't ever make that mistake.

God has called many of you to serve him, be faithful and don't let the glory depart from your ministry. Here the glory departed because there was secret sin in their life. And the Lord says in chapter nine, verse four, walk through the streets of Jerusalem and you can say the church walk into the churches and put a mark

on the foreheads of those who weep and sigh because of the sins they see in the church.

Now, if God were to send an angel today to put a mark on the forehead or a secret mark on people who are weeping for what? Weeping because the name of Jesus is dishonored in the church. How many people do you think there would be? I want to ask you, how many times have you been concerned in your heart that the name of Jesus is dishonored in India by Christians? Dishonored in the church? Dishonored in the churches? Whatever denomination you may belong to is dishonored in all the churches. Are you concerned about that? Then there's a mark upon you.

God marks out such people and the Lord says in that time, kill all the rest. All the others will end up in spiritual death. You will remain in life.

Concern, hallowed be thy name. The first prayer the Lord taught us to pray. If you have a concern for that, there's a mark upon you and that's the thing that determines that the glory of God will be upon you.

And as he began to kill, it says, first of all, in verse 6, the last part, the 70 elders were killed first. The elders who were supposed to be the leaders were the ones who had no concern at all. Tragic.

That's why the glory departed. In chapter 11, verse 1, we read about this spirit again, lifting him up and taking him away. In chapter 11, verse 23, we find that the glory of God finally left the city altogether and went east to the mountain, that is to Mount Olives, which is east of Jerusalem.

That's where Jesus ascended up to heaven. The glory departed and one day, the glory we read in chapter 43, verse 1 to 4, the glory came back to that same mountain. One day when Christ comes back, the glory, he will put his feet on Mount Olives and the glory of God will once again fill the earth.

And as Ezekiel prophesied, we read suddenly that one man fell down and died, verse 13, probably somebody who was opposing him. And notice another thing, verse 15 and 16, the Lord says, the people in Jerusalem, this is a very interesting verse, the people left in Jerusalem are saying, oh, those people in Babylon are far away from the Lord. Now he has given this land to us.

The people in Jerusalem were the people who disobeyed the Lord. The people in Babylon were the people who obeyed the Lord and went. When God chastened them, God said, OK, now the punishment has come.

Don't rebel against me. Just go. But the people in Jerusalem did not go.

And so the Lord says to Ezekiel, give the exiles this message. Even though you're in Babylon, I'll be a sanctuary for you over there. People thought because the temple is here in Jerusalem and this is the place God chose.

So God is here. God cannot be with the Babylonians. I mentioned yesterday how people have separated from the mainline denominations and started separated assemblies, say that they are Jerusalem and they think God is with us.

God is not with those Babylonian groups. The tragedy today, as I said yesterday, is that God is neither there nor here. There's just as much corruption in the so-called separated churches today and assemblies as there is in the other denominations.

Just as much pursuit of money, just as much politics. God is not there. God is not there just because you come out of a system and say, oh, I'm meeting in this group now.

No, God watches you all the time to see if you're humble, if you're broken, if you keep your conscience clear, if you're free from the love of money and you don't seek honor on this earth. So those are warnings for us from the Old Testament. And in chapter 13, we read the Lord rebuking the false prophets.

Verse 3, destruction is certain for the false prophets and also for the false prophetesses, verse 17, who make magic charms and things like that. In chapter 14, verse 3, the Lord rebukes the people for having idols in their hearts. And verses 6 to 11, it appears as though, as you read this, that it is God himself who allows these false prophets to be deceived.

Verse 9, if a prophet is deceived and gives a message anyway, it is because I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet. Why does God deceive certain people? I don't have time to show it to you. 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 10 and 11.

You read it sometime. It says, when a man does not love the truth about himself, God deceives him. That means when God shows you your sin and you are not willing to acknowledge it, you are in tremendous danger.

You will be deceived. When God tells me to go and apologize to somebody, maybe someone much younger than me, and I don't listen to him, I'm in great danger. I'm in danger of being deceived.

It says here, I, the Lord, will deceive that prophet. Because God is a God of truth. And when he sees that people don't love the truth, he allows them to be deceived.

Chapter 14 and verse 14, it says, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, they would only be able to save themselves. It's very interesting to see that God could praise a man like Daniel when Daniel was alive. Noah and Job were dead long ago, but Daniel was still alive.

He was right there in Babylon. Imagine that Daniel was such a godly man that God could praise him publicly while he was alive. He was much younger than Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was a much older man. And Ezekiel says, I really appreciate Ezekiel, that he could appreciate a godly young man. And says, the Lord says that if Noah and Job and this godly young brother Daniel were there, only they could save them from their righteousness.

There you see the humility of a man like Ezekiel who could recognize godliness in a younger brother. It's very rare to find servants of God like that today, who can appreciate godliness in a younger person. I just mentioned that in passing.

And chapter 16 is a very lovely chapter. You can take time to read it about, apply it spiritually to the way God found you when you were in sin, washed you, clothed you, decked you with the righteousness of Christ and married you. But you have been unfaithful to him.

I just want to show you one verse here in 49 and 50. Now if I were to ask you, what was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah? I think more than 99% of Christians would say their sin was sexual sin, homosexuality particularly. That was the ultimate result.

But what was the thing that led them into that? That is described in verse 49 and 50. Sodom's sins, verse 49, were pride, laziness, gluttony, love of food, not helping the poor and needy who were around them, that's why I wiped them out. He doesn't even mention sexual sin.

Now there's something here I want you to notice. What was the result of all this? Sexual sin. So what do we learn from that? Young people, listen.

There is a very close connection between pride and sexual sin. There's a very close connection between laziness and sexual sin. There's a very close connection between gluttony and sexual sin.

There's a very close connection between a lack of concern for other people and sexual sin. Just think of these four things. Some of you find, like all young people, that to overcome sexual desire and the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh is very, very difficult.

Agreed. It is very difficult. Why not begin with these four? And then you may find that overcoming sexual sin is easier.

Begin with humbling yourself. What is the second one? Laziness. Begin with being hardworking, diligent.

What's the third? Gluttony. Begin with fasting from food once in a while. Fourth, a lack of concern for other people.

Think a little more about the needs of other people. You please try this prescription and see if you don't overcome sexual sin much sooner than just trying to battle sexual sin all the time. It's a wonderful verse.

Chapter 17 speaks about Nebuchadnezzar. Chapter 18, there's a very good verse here which I think is important for us to understand from a theological standpoint when people ask us this question. Verse 2, 18-2.

Why do you quote this proverb, in the land of Israel, that the parents have eaten sour grapes and their children's mouths are having a bad taste? That means the parents sinned and the children are being punished for their sins. There's a common conception among heathen and even among many Christians that children suffer for the sins of their parents. The Lord says, as I live, you will not say this proverb anymore in Israel.

The Lord said that 2,500 years ago, but there are Christians saying it even today. Do you know that? There are books being published that the curse which is upon my great-grandfather has come down to me and I have to get rid of it somehow or the other. What absolute rubbish.

The Lord says, as I live, all people are mine to judge, parents and children, and this is my rule. Verse 4, the person who sins will be the one who dies. If my great-grandfather worshipped idols or was a practiced witchcraft, that's not going to have anything to do with me once I come to Christ.

Why? If I have not come to Christ, okay, then it's different. But once I come to Christ, God has plucked, cut me off from that tree called the tree of Adam in which I was, and grafted me into another tree called Christ. How in the world can there be a curse upon me? And yet there are Christians today, a lot of charismatic Christians who believe that, that there's a curse which descended from the ancestors.

That means he was still an Adam. I have been cut off from that tree and grafted into this tree and there's no curse in Christ. He became a curse for me on Calvary, so that the blessing of God can come upon me.

So don't believe all these Old Testament teachings. People go to some verse and here is what God says in Ezekiel to counter that. Now it's true that if a man is a drunkard, his children suffer because there's not enough money in the home.

That's a different thing. Physically, materially, we know that children suffer, the parents are bad. But spiritually, there is no punishment on a child for the father's sin, completely out of the question.

There's no curse on a child because of the father's sin, especially once he comes to Christ. Please remember that everybody's punished for his own sin. And let's move on now.

In chapter 23, we read about the apostasy of Israel and Judah. Again, the message of two sisters, both became prostitutes. The older one was Israel, symbolizing denominational churches, and Judah, symbolizing separated churches.

And Ezekiel stood and said, both of you have become spiritual harlots. Both of you have backslidden because you've come out of a system. You say, oh we don't have popes and bishops now, we have pastors.

It doesn't make a difference. If you've got a bad conscience and you don't walk in humility and brokenness, God says you're just the same as the others. Just because you change titles, doesn't make a difference.

Learn something from these lessons. Judah always felt we are better than Israel. We're not like them.

They are so bad. Ultimately they ended up in the same pit in which Israel ended up. Chapter 24, we read about part of the price this prophet Ezekiel had to pay.

His wife died, verse 16. And the Lord said, this is a sign. Your wife is going to die and you must not weep, you must not wail, you must not uncover your head or take off your sandals, and don't perform any rituals for mourning, verse 17.

And don't accept any food brought to you by your consoling friends. You see, a prophet was under the hand of God. There are many things that he was not allowed to do, which other people could do.

Remember that when you are a servant of God, you live by a totally different set of standards. You can't do what other people try to do. In chapter 26, verse 2, we read of Tyre rejoicing over the fall of Jerusalem.

A warning to those who rejoice when other people fall. Tyre said, wow, my business opportunities are improving now that Jerusalem is falling. Don't ever rejoice in the fall of another.

In chapter 28, we read of the prince of Tyre. And this is about Satan. The prince of the king of Tyre was Satan.

And you read about him in chapter 28 and verse 11 to verse 19. He was in Eden. Verse 13 tells us that Satan was first in Eden.

That was another Eden. That was another Eden, which was before the Eden that we read in Genesis 3. Before when, you know, I told you in chapter Genesis 1-2, there was a flood which wiped out the original Eden. The devil was there and he became the devil because, verse 17, his heart was filled with pride because of his beauty.

He corrupted his wisdom and thus he was defiled. There's a description of Satan which we saw along with the one in Isaiah chapter 14. And then in chapter 29-32, we read a number of prophecies of judgment on Egypt and on Pharaoh.

In chapter 33-39, we see the messages of hope for the future, the restoration of God's people. Chapter 33 verses 1-16 speak of man's responsibility to respond to God. And chapter 34 is a wonderful chapter which all those who are shepherds and pastors of God's people must read.

It deals with bad leaders, people who don't care for the sheep. And the Lord says that if you don't care for the sheep, verse 15, I myself will take care of my sheep. It's a very good chapter for those who are serious about being shepherds.

Chapter 36 speaks about the new covenant. Verse 25 onwards, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean and I will put my spirit in you. Verse 27 is speaking about this new covenant life where we are going to be, you know, we're going to find ourselves filled with the Holy Spirit with rivers flowing out through us.

This is prophesied here in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 36. And I just want you to notice one thing here, that when this happens, this is going to happen only if, verse 37, you pray for it. If you don't pray, you won't receive.

And verse 31, when it happens, you will remember your past sins and hate yourself. This is one of the marks of a man filled with the Holy Spirit. He detests himself for all the sin in his own life.

A spirit-filled man does not primarily see the sin in others, except as God shows it to him. He sees his own sin and he loathes himself. Chapter 37 is that wonderful picture of the valley of dry bones, where we see this valley that Ezekiel sees of dry bones.

And God, first of all, says, prophesy to it the word of God. And the bones come together and flesh comes upon it. And he says, you need one more thing.

What did we see in Genesis 1? The word of God and the Holy Spirit. So he says, this needs one more thing. Now they have come together.

Now you need the Holy Spirit to come upon them. And then when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they came up and became a mighty army for the Lord. I believe that's the picture of what God wants to do in the church.

So many Christians are like those dry bones, no freshness, no life. And we can say the word of God brings them together. And there's a little bit of beauty when the flesh comes on top of the bones.

There's a certain amount of beauty. And we can be people who study the word, understand the word, and it brings a certain amount of attractiveness in our life. But there's one more thing that we need.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon us, if we are to become an for the Lord. So that's the message of chapter 37. Chapter 38 and 39 deal with the enemies of Israel in the north of Israel, Gog and Magog, who are going to attack Israel and who are finally going to be defeated.

It has a reference to the last days. And chapter 40 to 48 is a picture, I believe, of the new covenant church. He describes it as a temple with all types of details.

And I want you to notice chapter 43 especially. Chapter 43, we read, the glory of the Lord which went away, verse 5, came back. It's a picture of the new covenant church that God began to establish from the day of Pentecost onwards.

And the Lord says, verse 7, this is the place of my throne. Today the place of God's throne is this new covenant church. The glory of God has come back.

Verse 2. And I want you to notice something here. There is a law, one law for this new covenant church. Verse 12.

This is the basic law of this temple, this new temple. Absolute holiness. The entire top of the hill where the temple is has to be holy.

This is the primary law of the temple. So what do we see here? The glory of God coming and the spirit of God taking Ezekiel up and the glory of God, verse 5, filling the temple and holiness. That's why the Holy Spirit is called Holy Spirit.

Now if we follow this rule, this basic law, we can build a church. Not otherwise. If you're only interested in gathering people, you will get converts.

You won't build a church. You won't build the body of Christ. If you want to build a church as a body of Christ, there's one fundamental law, absolute holiness.

For every person in the church, the standard is the same. And that was the burden of the prophets. And from such a church, we read in chapter 47, a river begins to flow.

This is the passage where Jesus quoted in John chapter 7, when he spoke about rivers of living water flowing out. Rivers of living water flow out from this new covenant temple. It starts as a little trickle and finally becomes a big river.

And the Lord gives him, Ezekiel, a little taste of what it means to live a spirit-filled life. Notice that in the first few verses. It says, as he went in, he led him along for about 1,750 feet and this water came up to his ankles.

Then he measured a little more distance. The water came up to his knees, verse 4. And then a little more distance and the water came up to his waist. And then a little more distance.

And then he had to swim. Now notice this. This is a picture of the spirit-filled life.

Some people like, you know, the Lord told Elijah, Elijah told Elijah, stay here. Are you happy? He said, no, I want more. I want more.

I want more. It's the same picture here in Ezekiel. Are you happy with this much? Ezekiel says, no, I want more.

Okay. The Lord leads him further. Are you happy with this much? No, I want more.

And finally, he comes to waters to swim in. Notice one difference. When the water is up to your knee, up to your ankles, you're still standing on ground.

When it's up to your knees, you're still standing on the ground. When it's up to your waist, you're still standing on the ground. You can have a measure of the Holy Spirit into a certain extent in your life, and still your whole mind is set on the ground, on earthly things.

But the real fullness of the Spirit is where your feet are taken off the earth, where you're lifted from earthly things, and now you have to swim. You're led by the Spirit. The mark of a Spirit-filled man, truly Spirit-filled man, is his feet are not on the earth.

He is not attached to earthly things. One last word, chapter 48, verse 35. The name of this new covenant church is, the Lord is there.

Jehovah Shammah. This is the church you and I are called to build, but it begins when you and I become people like Ezekiel. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us to be the type of servants that you want us to be in this day and this age, in our land, for your glory. We humbly ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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