

< Briars and Thorns be With Thee >

Ezekiel 2:1 – 3:19

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~ The most difficult people to reach with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are *NOT* Buddhists, *NOT* Muslims, *NOT* the lost man, *NOT* criminals, *NOT* drug addicts, *NOT* homosexuals – and not even atheists or agnostics. No, friends, the most difficult people to reach with the truth of Holy Writ are dedicated, participating church members. Many people, perhaps most who go to church, sing the doxology, sing in the choir, sit in the front pew, post Bible stuff day and night on religious social media – all while they are in abject rebellion against God. They actually reject the Gospel and the Word of God entirely. They think Christianity is only about being nice, prosperous, sweet little girls and boys — and they speak incessantly about loving everyone. Interestingly, they never seem to like me very much. They just play church; because it's a pacifier – whereby they can feel better about their treacherous condition, and appear to others as super-duper saints, which they are not. It's all syrupy, surface and sedate stuff to them; never sound doctrine. Tell them they are sinners who need a Savior, and that they need to confess their sins and – you're *O-U-T*. That's when they skim through one of these safari reports, roll their eyes at me, make some insults, and never intend to do anything about taking the entire Word of God to the entire world in sound doctrine. They won't support this effort under any circumstances, that's for sure. They won't even afford me a brief, cursory consideration before dismissing me without a second thought.

Well, God told Ezekiel to take a message to that type of people; the whole impudent house of Israel. God also warned Ezekiel in no uncertain terms that His people were not going to listen. God told Ezekiel that *NONE* of them would hear what Ezekiel had to say, and they wouldn't accept the message God gave him to give to them. Period. Nonetheless, God told Ezekiel to do it. The Jews in Babylonian captivity had no intention of believing Ezekiel, because they didn't believe God. Ironically, that's why they were in captivity in the first place. The man who teaches Scripture properly, correctly and completely today is cast in the same role as Ezekiel – every time – no exceptions.

There is constant, non-stop chatter about religion. The truths of the Bible have been so mishandled that the precepts have almost become relegated to cliché. Throw in heretical interpretations, translations, and engineered versions, and whatever you want to believe about the Bible is readily taught by someone for the right price. Well, Paul said I am a savor of life unto those who are saved, and a savor of death unto those who perish. Frankly, the Gospel is going to condemn most people – not save them.

There are endless theological debates today about holidays, repentance, money, sin, baptism – and about what really happens when one is born again – but the so-called Christian holding erroneously preconceived notions is rarely persuaded to believe anything other than their own philosophy of whatever. I can't persuade anyone to believe in God and accept Christ. You can't, either. Only the Spirit of God can do that. The problem is: the average self-professing believer never studies the Bible; and the Spirit of God only speaks to mankind in Scripture. The Bible is the best-selling book no one reads. Well, the first step in salvation is conviction; and conviction can only ever come from hearing the Word of God taught properly, correctly and completely. If your heart has never been convicted by Holy Writ, then there is *NO POSSIBLE WAY* you have been chosen for salvation, my friend. This is very important to understand....

II

1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.

4 For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.

8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

9 And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;

10 And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

III

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

~ We are dealing with the infinite God now, friends. The best we can do is stand on the fringes of truth and worship Him and praise His Name. The vision from the first chapter, which we covered in our first two prophetic safari reports from this book of the Bible, combined with the message God gave to Ezekiel in these two chapters, had a profound affect on this man. It changed his life. As we have seen time and time again, when Old Testament saints came into the presence of God, they fell down on their faces to worship Him. Remember, Isaiah said he was a man of unclean lips, and he fell down and praised God. Daniel did the same thing, confessing his sins. John, on the Isle of Patmus, fell at Jesus' feet *as dead*. Well, that's when the Spirit of God came upon Ezekiel and told him to '*stand*' in chapter two verse one. Paul instructs us to stand in Ephesians.

The remainder of this report deals with the call, commission, and enduement of power to the office of prophet that God Himself empowered Ezekiel with when He called him. Interestingly, God calls Ezekiel the "*son of man*" exactly one hundred times in this prophecy. Daniel is also called "*son of man*." Daniel and Ezekiel are the only two in the Old Testament that are referred to as such; and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ appropriated this title of "*Son of Man*" to Himself in the New Testament – eighty-six times. It speaks of Christ in His rejection, in suffering, and in humiliation – and in His

exaltation. It also refers to His glory in His second coming. When Christ returns to the earth to establish His earthly Kingdom, He will return as the Son of Man.

I am absolutely sure Ezekiel endured more suffering than Isaiah or Jeremiah - and probably even Daniel. Daniel was in danger in the lions den; but, overall, he still lived in the palace and had all the luxury thereof. Jeremiah suffered in prison but, by this time, when the children of Israel were in the cruel and hard bondage labor of slavery down in Babylon, Jeremiah was still in Jerusalem owning land and property. Ezekiel was sent to do a tremendously difficult job; one that never got any easier all the days of his life. He was sent to speak to an apostate people in abject rebellion against God and in bitterness because they perceived the Lord had forsaken them; but they still believed they were God's chosen people - and they were given that assurance by the prophets. So, I would least want to be like Ezekiel; and, yet, that's the call and commission God gave to me, Andrew C. Hunt.

When God calls us to do a job, He gives us the power, time and resources to do that job. I should add that He gives us those resources *BEFORE* He calls us, too. I see so many people today say, "... *I'm going to start a ministry*" - and then they beg for money to do it. Well, I know immediately those people are not allowing the Spirit of God to work through them in His power. No, they have intruded into the priest's office like Uzziah; and they are always made spiritual lepers - like Uzziah - and Uzziah was *GOOD* king! No, friends, if God has called us to do something, He will make the way *BEFORE* He calls. Candidly, if you recognize you can't do it, then you'll be in the best position possible to begin with God. Remember, it took Moses forty years in the wilderness before he realized he was unable to deliver the children of Israel. Only *THEN* did God say, "*I will do it through you, Moses!*"

This is practical truth for anyone considering the ministry to consider. It flows out into the pew, the mission field, and even in the secular business world. I know of *MANY* young men and women who think they have been called to the ministry or mission field but when I question them, I am always criticized; and those people generally don't like me very much after that. Well, friends, I just happen to have a spiritual compass that tells me

who's-who and who's qualified – and who isn't. Frankly, I can talk to someone for ten minutes and determine if God has truly called them, or if they have called themselves to intrude into the office of the priesthood – like Uzziah. Well, almost all of them that I recommend not to go into the missionary or ministry do go – but they also come back as Christian Tragedy casualties. They are always bitter that the Lord has let them down – when God didn't call them in the first place.

These people that God sent Ezekiel to were in rebellion against God, friends. Interestingly, when God calls Israel a “*nation*” in this section of Scripture, it is the Hebrew word that the Jews used for the heathen, pagan nations. When God called Israel a chosen nation, He used an altogether different Hebrew word. The call to the ministry today is a difficult, arduous task. If you're unsure about this teaching, you might want to stick to selling used cars – or something like that – because entering the ministry and truly standing for the Word of God is going to cost you your health, your friends, your family, your money - and your *LIFE*; and you can just write that down.

God told Ezekiel not to be afraid of the people because Ezekiel came into a dangerous situation in his ministry. Briars and thorns with scorpions doesn't sound like a great place to live. The Lord lays it all out and on the line with this prophet; and that's what I am doing in these reports, too. If you think you are called to do this work, then this is the way it is going to be. It is a difficult assignment. Ezekiel was a strong man; as tough as nails. Jeremiah had been a soft-hearted man, with a weeping nature, because they were not yet in captivity in Jeremiah's day. Here, of course, they are in captivity, and the dynamic has changed completely. At this time in which we are studying, the false prophets were still telling the children of Israel that they would go back to Jerusalem soon, and that Jeremiah was a liar, and Ezekiel had no earthly idea what he was talking about. As a result, the Jews in captivity hated Ezekiel, because they didn't want to hear the truth.

Well, it turns out that Jeremiah was accurate, Ezekiel had received much of his information from Jeremiah; and the false prophets and the people were the ones who were horribly wrong. The captivity lasted every single minute – to the day of each of the seventy years – that these two prophets of God had said it would last. It was hard and dangerous work slaving away on

those canals, too. See, Ezekiel had eaten the scroll of the Word of God and it had become a part of him. That's the way the Scriptures should be to our bodies – part of them. No man should ever step foot in a pulpit if his heart is not one hundred percent saturated with the things of Christ. Any man that doesn't believe every word he says, candidly, shouldn't even speak of the things of God; because all they ever do is hurt the Gospel, hurt other people, discredit the genuine Bible teacher, and do a disservice to the cause of Christ.

The pulpit is no place for flowery speeches or pep talks. High-flown excess verbiage in the name of preaching is just so much blah. If you cannot declare the Word of God properly, correctly and completely then, seriously, try just shutting your mouth. Do you love the Person of Christ? Do you really love the unadulterated and undiluted Word of God? Or are you really just peddling some self-serving and self-righteous personal hidden agenda wrapped up in a philosophy of whatever from wherever? If you play with the Bible, you *WILL* get burned, friends. The apostle John also ate the scroll in Revelation, and said it was sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his belly. Well, if you're not serious about what you are doing in your "*ministry*" this thing will literally be poison to you. There will come a time when you will wish you had never even seen a Bible. Don't think so? – Try it! You can trust one thing, my dear readers: I know what I am talking about.

It is impossible to love the Lord Jesus Christ if you do not love the Word of God. In the final analysis, we're not even talking about ones attitude towards the Bible; your theory of inspiration is meaningless. You have to love Scripture and love the Lord Jesus Christ to the ends of what you understand love to be – or you are just wasting your time. The Word of God reveals a very real Person. Your own people – those whose language you speak – are going to hate you and despise you if you accept Him. Ezekiel isn't like the apostle Paul, who was sent to the Gentiles in a foreign land. This is a man trying to convey God's message to his fellow countrymen. Remember, Jeremiah wanted to resign; but Ezekiel isn't about to resign. Ezekiel had a hard head. I have a very hard head, too – as some of you already know. I am not trying to be ugly simply for the sake of being ugly, friends; but this Spiritual Safari is going to give you the Word of God –

straight from the proverbial horse's mouth. Think I'm wrong? – Pray for me,
then, ask Ezekiel ~

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