

## Lesson 96 - CHRIST OUR SUPREME WATCHMAN      *Ezekiel 3*

Ezekiel, whose name means “strengthened by God,” grew up in Jerusalem, where he trained to be a priest in the temple. He was among the second group of captives taken to Babylon in 597 BC. While in Babylon the Lord God called, commissioned, and equipped Ezekiel to be a prophet of God (*Ezek. 2*). He is the only prophet who never prophesied in the promised land. In *verse 17* the Lord calls upon Ezekiel to be a “*watchman unto the house of Israel.*” Watchmen in the Bible were guards responsible for protecting towns and military installations from surprise enemy attacks and other potential dangers. Ancient Israelite cities often stationed watchmen on high walls or in watchtowers. Their job was to keep watch and warn the townspeople of impending threats.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the SUPREME WATCHMAN, for He is the Great Shepherd who watches over His sheep. He gave His life for His sheep, and He now lives to make intercession for them and to protect and preserve them unto glory. He watches over them. One of the means by which He watches over His sheep is to provide them with under-shepherds who watch over them to guide them in His Word and warn them of danger. These are God’s prophets, pastors, and preachers. God’s Word says, “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*” (*Heb. 13:17*). These are ministers of Christ and His people. Their only authority is the Word of God.

**(*Ezek. 3:1-3*)** - The first requirement of a true watchmen is that he must know, believe, and love the Word of God (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; Gal. 1:15-16*). To eat the scroll means to possess himself fully of the message and digest it in his mind and heart. That which is by nature distasteful to him becomes “*as honey for sweetness.*” It is so much a part of him that he cannot lose it or leave it (*1 John 2:20ff.*).

**(*Ezek. 3:4-11*)** - The way Ezekiel was received with opposition and hatred would cause us to think he was preaching to unlearned heathen who had never heard the law of God, but this was not the case! Ezekiel was preaching to people who should have known better than to reject the Lord and His Word. They were people who had the law and who had heard the warnings of Jeremiah, and yet they were determined to ignore and oppose God’s Word. This is the way of all of us by nature. Some might use *verse 6* to conclude that the Bible teaches that man has the natural ability within himself to choose the things of the Spirit of God, but the Bible teaches otherwise (*Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3*). We are all by nature described in *verse 7* (*cf. Jer. 17:9*). This is why we must be born again and given a new heart by the grace of God in Christ (*Matt. 13:10-16; John 3:3-7*). If salvation were conditioned on the wills and cooperation of sinful people, then those who do believe and follow Christ could boast that they were saved because they were better than the Jews to whom Ezekiel preached. This is not the case. Salvation, including our willingness to believe and follow Christ, is all of grace (*Eph. 2:8-10*)!

**(*Ezek. 3:12-14*)** - The message and ministry of a true minister of God, a true watchman, is about God’s glory, not man’s felt needs. This is the shekinah glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and accomplished by His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. *Verses 13-14* describes the ministers of God’s Gospel going forth in the providence and power of God to preach His Word and in fulfillment of His sovereign will (*2 Cor. 2:14-17*).

**(Ezek. 3:15-21)** - God's prophets and preachers have always been compared to watchmen (lookouts) who stand a post on the wall and warn the people when danger is coming (*Isa. 62:6-12; Hab. 2:1-4*). The faithful watchman is one who tells the people the truth as God reveals it to him. He speaks peace ("all is well") only when there is true peace as proclaimed by God. He speaks of danger when the enemy is coming, warning the people to prepare or to flee to a proper refuge for safety. As God's true ministers, faithful watchman, we point the people to the only safe refuge - the Lord Jesus Christ. When sinners are seeking salvation by their wills and works, we cannot speak peace to them because there is no peace for sinners except in Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Peace with God and safety can only come through Christ and His righteousness (*Isa. 32:15-20*).

"*At the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me*" sets the true watchman's message. The seventh day is the Sabbath which represents the finished work of Christ for the sins of His people - "*IT IS FINISHED*" (*John 19:30*). The Gospel is the glorious Person and finished work of Christ to establish righteousness by which God justifies His people - the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The watchman is sent "*to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life.*" All ways but the ONE way of God's grace in Christ are wicked and deadly (*Prov. 14:12; 16:25; Matt. 7:13-14; John 14:6*). Ministers of Christ cannot save sinners, but they point sinners to Christ Who is the one and only way of salvation. When a minister fails to point a sinner to Christ alone, and that sinner dies "*in his iniquity,*" his blood is on that minister's hands - soul murder! If the watchman warns him of the danger and calls on him to repent, and the sinner refuses, the minister is clear of his blood.

Verse 20 does not speak of one who is truly righteous, or justified by the righteousness of Christ, because one who is truly righteous and has been born again by the Spirit can never turn from Christ (*1 John 3:9*). He can never be in an unjustified state because God will not impute sin to him, and the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to him. The one who is described here has a claim of righteousness based on his own works. His righteousness is sham outward appearance and not the reality of God's grace in Christ. "*And I lay a stumblingblock before him*" - God puts him in a hard place where he cannot escape. God never does this to His people made righteous in Christ. If the watchman fails to warn him, and the unbeliever continues in that state, "*righteousness which he hath done*" will count for nothing. He will die in his sins, "*but his blood will I require at thine hand.*" This shows us the conditional nature of the Law. Sinners cannot meet its conditions and will always fail. It shows our need of God's grace and the righteousness of God in Christ. It also shows how false preachers will have a lot for which to answer at the Judgment.

**(Ezek. 3:22-27)** - Christ, the Supreme Watchman, speaks to Ezekiel whom the Lord set as a watchman over the people - the prophet alone with the Lord, receiving instruction. The Lord tells him that the people are rebellious and will reject the message of grace (*John 3:19-20; 15:18ff.*). God's judgment will be to let them go on in their own ways of death and destruction; but then He will open Ezekiel's mouth to speak His Word. And as God always has a remnant according to the election of grace, He says, "*He that heareth, let him hear.*" But he who refuses, let him go on refusing because they are rebellious and unbending. The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Do I have ears to hear?" If I do, I recognize this is the result of God's power and grace to give me spiritual life in the new birth that I will hear and believe His Word in Christ, the Gospel of God's grace through the blood and righteousness of Christ.