

**Ezek. 33:1** Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,  
**Ezek. 33:2** Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them,  
When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of  
their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

**Ezek. 33:3** If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the  
trumpet, and warn the people;

**Ezek. 33:4** Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not  
warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his  
own head.

**Ezek. 33:5** He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood  
shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

**Ezek. 33:6** But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet,  
and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from  
among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at  
the watchman's hand.

Ezekiel receives another message from the Lord, and this time it is directed to the Jewish people. He begins the message by telling a short story. He is establishing the importance of the position of watchman for a city; the watchman is supposed to sound an alarm at any sign of approaching danger to the people. Those who heed the warning of the watchman have a strong possibility of saving their lives. Those who ignore his warning may die. The watchman is absolved of any responsibility for the loss of life since he faithfully sounded the warning. If, however, the watchman fails to sound the warning when he sees danger approaching, he will be held accountable for the people who lose their lives because he failed to do his duty.

In verse two the phrase “When I bring the sword upon a land,” stood out to me. It doesn't mean that enemy attack upon a nation is always a judgment of God, but I think it is important for us to recognize that it can be. We rightly focus on the fact that God is a God of love, but we often forget that His love is sometimes expressed in judgment. He hates sin and often intervenes with fiery judgment to purge sin and allow those who remain to know that He is the LORD and allow them an opportunity to respond in faith and repentance to Him.

I think it is also important to note that the watchman is held accountable for sounding a warning according to the information he possesses. Obviously, he can sound no warning for that for which he is unaware. If, however, he possesses information of approaching danger, he should be faithful to sound the warning. I think the application to the believer today regarding sounding the alarm for the danger of rejecting Christ as Savior is apparent.

It is also significant to note that the watchman's duty is to sound the warning, but it is up to the individual as to how he chooses to respond to that warning. There are only two options—to heed the warning and be saved or to reject the warning and die. Again, the application to the believer who shares the gospel message with the unbeliever is obvious.

**Ezek. 33:7** So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

Ezekiel has been chosen by God, not by man, to be a watchman for the house of Israel. As God's watchman, he is to sound the messages of warning that God issues to His people. Ezekiel first found out about his commission as a watchman in chapter 3.

**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.

**Ezek. 33:8** When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

**Ezek. 33:9** Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

These verses are basically the same as those that followed his commissioning in chapter 3.

**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.

The same comments apply. 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. 33:10** Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?

**Ezek. 33:11** Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel is to pose a question to the people. My paraphrase--Since we are being destroyed as a people because of our rebellion and wickedness, how can we find life again?

God gives the answer: Turn from your evil ways and live. God takes no pleasure in the death of wicked people. He created man for fellowship with Him, to bring Him honor and glory. He is not, however, going to force man into a relationship with Him. Love can't be coerced; it can only be freely given. I believe that is why God sovereignly chose to allow man freedom of choice. When I looked up the Hebrew for the word *wicked*, I found the word *condemned* included. This reminded me of the verse in John's gospel.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: **but he that believeth not is condemned already....**

I know that in context John is referencing belief in the Son of God, but the truth applies just as surely in this passage since Father and Son are One.

John 10:25 Jesus answered them....

John 10:30 I and *my* Father are one.

1John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Another thought comes to mind—What differentiates one who is wicked from one who is righteous? Obviously, we would answer that the wicked person does bad things and the righteous person does good things. Does God evaluate the two using that principle? I think not. Whether we are classified as righteous or wicked is directly related to our choosing to follow God in faith and obedience or not. Righteous acts before God are those done in obedience to and for the love of Him. I've listened to Ravi Zacharias enough to know that our understanding of "good" and "bad" has to have a foundation; and the only acceptable foundation for that determination before God is the revelation of His truth—the scripture, the Word of God.

The word *turn* implies a change of direction, an about face, to go in the opposite direction. To make an about face from living wickedly would be to live righteously. Those who live righteously are choosing to live according to the truth and commands of a righteous God.

"why will ye die, O house of Israel?" – I can almost hear the tone of the Father as he addresses His chosen people. A Father wants only the best for those He loves. He does everything possible to provide for their every need and for their happiness. It's distressing and disappointing to watch that loved one reject your provision.

**Ezek. 33:12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth.**

The first thought I had upon reading this verse was in reference to how so many people believe that all they have to do is make sure that their good deeds outweigh the bad on God's scale of judgment. That is not scriptural—in either the Old or New Testament. It also brought to mind man's proclivity to want to avoid dealing with the present. We think God can't save us now because we

have been too bad. Or we think we can rest on past laurels as we choose to fellowship with the world now. Or we think we can enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season and deal with our spiritual future later.

God is teaching His people that they must choose to respond to Him daily. The Israelites of Ezekiel's time were living under the law; it was a system that emphasized the need for sin to be dealt with immediately. A relationship needs to be nurtured by daily expressions of love and commitment.

**Ezek. 33:13** When I shall say to the righteous, *that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.*

This verse directly refutes the idea that you can expect past "good" deeds to outweigh the "bad" things you are doing. The fact that you are doing wicked things reflects the true condition of your heart. Sin has consequences, and sometimes the consequence is loss of life.

**Ezek. 33:14** Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

**Ezek. 33:15** *If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

**Ezek. 33:16** None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

These verses reflect the truth that God is longsuffering. God is holy and righteous and has the sovereign right to exercise that longsuffering for whatever time He chooses. We have to understand that we are not guaranteed the next minute of our life. Still, according to His own determination, He allows man an opportunity to turn from His wicked ways and do that which is "lawful and right" before Him. Again, we have to recognize that He is THE authority regarding what is "lawful and right." A person who truly turns from wickedness will have a heart to recompense those whom he has wronged. He will desire to live according to God's law and will choose to avoid sin. That type of change results in a life that is living within the protective boundaries of God's will.

JFB brought out an interesting point: "If the law has failed to give life to man, it has not been the fault of the law, but of man's sinful inability to keep it."

(10/12) The phrase "None of his sins...be mentioned unto him" this time. What a blessed promise! It goes hand-in-hand with our sins being removed as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12).

**Ezek. 33:17** Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.

God anticipates the reaction of the people and prepares Ezekiel to refute their reasoning. He knows that they are going to accuse Him of not being fair. It's the same way men rationalize how they live today. We can't seem to grasp the

concept that God's way is the only way. Not only is it the only way, it is the only right way. It is men with their limited understanding that devise justice systems that are not fair.

**Ezek. 33:18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.**

**Ezek. 33:19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.**

**Ezek. 33:20 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.**

God is a holy, righteous judge. He has declared His truth, and He will hold each individual responsible for how they respond to that truth. This emphasizes the truth that the prophet shared in chapter 18.

**Ezek. 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.**

God is not going to judge us based on how we measure up to other people, which is how we mortals judge other people and ourselves more often than not. He will judge each individual based upon their own response to His truth and His commands.

**Ezek. 33:21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten.**

**Ezek. 33:22 Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.**

These verses announce the direct fulfillment of the prophecy given in chapter 24, verses 26-27. Jerusalem had been destroyed and one who had escaped the destruction had come to inform those in captivity in Babylon. God's word had been proven true again—as always.

*That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.*

Up until this time Ezekiel had only been able to speak to deliver God's messages as instructed. From this point on, he was able to speak freely.

It would seem that God had freed Ezekiel's tongue the night before the messenger arrived, but he didn't speak to the people until the morning after the messenger arrived.

**Ezek. 33:23 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

**Ezek. 33:24 Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance.**

God speaks to the prophet and tells him how the few who survived the Babylonian attack were reasoning in their hearts. They figured since Abraham,

one man, had inherited the land, surely his descendants, which are many, deserved to possess the land. They were totally ignoring the warnings that God had given them as a people through Moses regarding the consequences for not keeping covenant with Him as LORD.

Deut. 5:33 Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* ye may prolong *your* days in the land which ye shall possess.

Deut. 8:19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

Deut. 8:20 As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

Deut. 28:63 And it shall come to pass, *that* as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Deut. 28:64 And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even* wood and stone.

**Ezek. 33:25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?**

In this verse the LORD details just some of the ways they have broken covenant with Him.

Lev. 17:14 For *it is* the life of all flesh; the blood of it *is* for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh *is* the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

Lev. 19:4 Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I *am* the LORD your God.

Ex. 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

He basically says—You think I should honor you for your disobedience and go against My word?

**Ezek. 33:26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?**

And the list continues--“Ye stand upon your sword” references depending upon the might of man rather than trusting God. He had given them specific promise of every type of blessing if they would but trust and obey Him as LORD.

Lev. 26:1 Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up *any* image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I *am* the LORD your God.

Lev. 26:2 Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I *am* the LORD.

Lev. 26:3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

Lev. 26:4 Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

Lev. 26:5 And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

Lev. 26:6 And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make *you* afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.

Lev. 26:7 And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.

Deut. 25:16 ... all that do unrighteously, *are* an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Lev. 18:20 Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her.

Again the Lord basically answers—And you think I should go against my word?

**Ezek. 33:27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that *are* in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that *is* in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that *be* in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.**

**Ezek. 33:28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.**

Again, point is made that Ezekiel is delivering the very words of God. He is declaring that those who are left in the land and thinking they have been mistreated instead of repenting for their wickedness and seeking God's forgiveness are going to die—by the sword, by the beasts of the field and by pestilence/plague. They cannot hide from the judging hand of Almighty God. Israel is going to be desolate; the people will not be able to take pride in anything. No one will want to travel through the land for fear of what might happen to him.

**Ezek. 33:29 Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.**

Again, a very sad word—THEN. It will take the harsh judgment of God to wake the people up to His authority and power and the truth of His word. They will not be able to deny the truth of the message God delivered to them through the prophets. They will recognize God as LORD when He judges them for their wickedness.

**Ezek. 33:30 Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.**

**Ezek. 33:31** And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as my people*, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness.

Ezekiel, the prophet of the LORD, has drawn a lot of attention. Those who speak with the power of God do. The captives in Babylon are drawn to come and hear what Ezekiel has to say, but they are coming under false pretences. They say they are coming to hear from God, but they have no intention of responding in faith and repentance to that message. They have no intention of changing their way of life. Why are they even pretending? Because they hope to profit from their pretence.

How loudly does that speak to the culture of the church today! Many are in the ministry as a means to an end—that end being wealth and fame. Many follow false teachers in hopes of reaping great reward from little to no investment. Many emphasize the giving of money without regard of giving of self in submission and service. I am convinced that the church as a whole today mirrors the church of Laodicea to whom the apostle wrote in the Revelation that thought it was rich and in need of nothing, but God saw it as “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked...” (Revelation 3:17)

**Ezek. 33:32** And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

**Ezek. 33:33** And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

To the people Ezekiel was just a form of entertainment to be enjoyed. Although they heard his words, they had no intention of acting upon them. Nevertheless, God’s word is true and everything that the prophet has told them will come to pass. THEN they will know that a prophet has been among them.

How many times does he have to be proven true to be believed? We have an amazing ability to ignore history, the experiences of others, and even truths that we personally witness in order to pursue our own way. God does everything short of force to cause us to turn to Him in faith and repentance. We won’t have a leg to stand on at the throne of judgment if we choose to reject the truth He has revealed to us.