

Preach Truth in Love no Matter How Hostile the Environment (Thoughts on Ezekiel 2-3)

The spiritual state of God's people in Babylonian captivity had reached an alarming condition during the days of Ezekiel. They were rebellious, disrespectful to God, and strongly opposed His Laws (Ezek. 2:3-4). Such a condition of the heart would prove to be a hostile environment of "briars and thorns" for any who would expose their dark deeds (Ezek. 2:6). The Lord commissions Ezekiel to be the man of this hour. Ezekiel would go into a hostile environment and say, "thus saith Jehovah" (Ezek. 2:4). The consequences to the person of Ezekiel would be shunning words of opposition, and looks that could kill (Ezek. 2:6). This being the case, God gives Ezekiel a work and encourages him to "be not afraid" (Ezek. 2:6).

Ezekiel chapter three continues the description of a hostile preaching environment. Though Ezekiel would speak words that could be understood, the people of God would treat them as though they were a foreign language (Ezek. 3:4ff). This was not done due to their confusion or their inability to understand what Ezekiel would be saying but because they did not want to hear what he had to say (cf. Isa. 6:6ff). Ezekiel was given a responsibility to preach even though his audience would not want to hear the words he spoke (cf. Ezek. 2:7). The words of Ezekiel were to be as a watchman upon a walled city, as one who sees a threatening enemy approaching. The watchman would sound the alarm so that the city's inhabitants could do the necessary things to prepare for the battle. God tells Ezekiel to warn the wicked and the righteous who have erred so that they would not "die in their sins" (Ezek. 3:18-19).

Practical Application

There are two primary applications to be made from these two chapters. The first is that everyone should know the work he enters when becoming a Christian. When I follow God's commands without turning to the left or right and demand that others do so as well I will not be liked (Jn. 3:20; 15:18ff). So it was with Jesus (cf. Jn. 7:7; 15:18ff) and the apostles (cf. I Cor. 4:9ff). The apostle Paul tells us that said sufferings are the "appointment" for every faithful child of God (I Thess. 3:3ff; II Tim. 3:12). We are also encouraged to not fear the looks nor the ill words of the rebellious (II Tim. 1:7-8) but rather expose their sinful deeds (Eph. 5:11). Souls are at stake and I must ask myself the question, "do I really love and care for the souls of men?" If my answer is yes, I will preach without fear or favor of man and his will.

The second application for the Christian today is that we have the responsibility to watch and warn the wicked and righteous who have erred (cf. Acts 18:6; 20:26; Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 16:13; I Thess. 5:6; Heb. 13:17; Rev. 16:15). If we neglect to warn the wicked and erring righteous of their sinful ways they will die in their sins. We are guilty of spiritual murder if such neglect occurs (cf. Gen. 9:5-6; Ezek. 3:18; Acts 18:6; 20:26). The apostle Paul commanded the Ephesians to expose man's sins rather than fellowship them and so we are charged (Eph. 5:11). Let no man be deceived by doctrines of demons that exclaim, 'but you violate another church's autonomy when you cross the lines of geographic location to expose another's sins.' The apostle John loved "all" those who know the truth not just the one's at the local church he attended (cf. II Jn. 1:1). The apostle Paul preached the same truth in every local church he came in contact or established (I Cor. 4:17). The apostle Peter commanded Christians to "love the brotherhood" (I Pet. 2:17). It was a love of the "brotherhood" that motivated the Jerusalem church to send out preachers to expose the false doctrines regarding syncretism teachings that had invaded churches in Palestine and Galatia (cf. Acts 15). Let us all understand that sin is sin no matter where it is conducted and where there is opportunity there is responsibility. When we watch and warn each other we are displaying the highest degree of love for one another. So preach the truth in love no matter how hostile the environment is!

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