

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 14: The Watchman and the Fallen City -- Ezekiel 33:1–33

Chapter 33 is a hinge in the book of Ezekiel, the turning point where the long thunder of judgment gives way to the dawn of hope. For thirty-two chapters the prophet has pronounced doom on Jerusalem; now the news arrives that the city has fallen, and the whole tone of his ministry begins to change. But before the message of restoration can be heard, God renews the prophet's commission with the solemn imagery of the watchman, the man set on the wall to warn the city of approaching danger.

The watchman's charge is a matter of life and death. If he sees the sword coming and blows the trumpet, the people are warned; whoever then ignores the warning bears his own blood. But if the watchman sees the sword and fails to sound the alarm, the people perish in their sin, and God requires their blood at the watchman's hand. The picture sets before us two distinct accountabilities, the messenger's duty to warn and the hearer's duty to heed, and it presses on every conscience the weight of God's word.

At the heart of the chapter beats one of the tenderest declarations in all of Scripture: As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. The God who certainly judges takes no delight in destroying. His warnings are mercy in the form of a trumpet blast, calling the lost to turn and live. Judgment and grace meet here in a single voice.

The chapter ends with a sobering portrait of Ezekiel's hearers. They flock to listen, they call him a fine voice, they sit before him as if to enjoy a love song beautifully sung, but they do not do what he says. They are hearers and not doers, charmed by the sound of truth yet untouched in obedience. The danger is timeless, and it falls on us as surely as on them: to admire the message while ignoring its claim on our lives.

Group Discussion: Read Ezekiel 33:1–9 aloud and discuss the twofold accountability of the watchman and the hearer. In what ways is every Christian called to be a faithful watchman, warning the lost with the gospel, and how do we feel the weight of that charge today?

Personal Reflection: This week, examine yourself honestly against the closing verses of the chapter. Are you a hearer who delights in good preaching and rich Bible study but does not do what the word says? Choose one specific command you have admired but neglected, and put it into practice as an act of obedience.

Read Ezekiel 33:1–33

Study Questions

1. In Ezekiel 33:1–6, what is the watchman's duty, and how does the passage distinguish between the watchman's accountability and the hearer's own responsibility when the warning is given?
2. Where in your own life have you heard a clear warning from God's word yet treated it as someone else's concern rather than your own?
3. According to 33:7–9, God says that if the watchman fails to warn the wicked, the wicked will die in his iniquity but his blood God will require at the watchman's hand. What does this teach about the seriousness of faithful gospel proclamation?
4. Think of someone in your life who needs the warning of the gospel. What has kept you from sounding the trumpet, and what would faithfulness look like this week?
5. In 33:10–11 God declares, As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. How does this statement hold together God's certain judgment and His genuine mercy?
6. When you picture God's attitude toward sinners, do you imagine Him eager to condemn or longing for them to turn and live? How does His own self-revelation here reshape that picture?

7. In 33:12–20 God answers the charge that His way is not just, insisting that the righteous who turns to sin will die and the wicked who turns to righteousness will live. What does this teach about personal accountability and the impossibility of resting on past righteousness or being bound by past sin?
8. Is there a past obedience you are quietly resting upon, or a past failure you assume defines you forever? How does this passage call you to turn today rather than coast or despair?
9. Verses 30–33 describe people who hear Ezekiel as one who sings beautiful love songs, sitting eagerly before him yet not doing what he says. Set this beside the call to be doers of the word and not hearers only who deceive themselves in James 1:22. How can we tell whether we are truly heeding God's word or merely enjoying it as entertainment, and what concrete evidence would mark the difference in our daily lives?
10. Looking back over this whole chapter, write one sentence describing how you will move this week from being a hearer who admires the word to a doer who obeys it, and name the first step you will take.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: James 1:22–25, be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves; Acts 20:26–27, Paul declares himself innocent of the blood of all because he did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God; 2 Peter 3:9, the Lord is patient, not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance; Luke 13:3, unless you repent you will all likewise perish; Matthew 7:24–27, the one who hears these words and does them builds on the rock, but the one who hears and does not do them builds on sand.

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