

TURN FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS

Ezekiel 33:1-20

Intro: The LORD has set me as a watchman to blow the trumpet and warn the people. A heavy burden is upon me to preach the word of God by the gospel and warn the wicked. Who are the wicked? The wicked are those without Christ. The wicked are unforgiven. The wicked are yet in their sins. The wicked are cursed by the law and condemned to die. God sees every man outside of Christ as wicked. The Soul of the LORD hates the wicked. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous LORD loves righteousness (Ps. 11:5-7). If you're not righteous, then you're wicked. If you're not perfectly holy, then you're unholy. The only way for sinners to be righteous and holy is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the LORD our Righteousness. He of God is made to us Sanctification or Holiness. Christ is the Righteousness of all that believe.

(Jn. 3:18) "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

(Jn. 3:36) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

This is my burden, to sound the warning and point sinners to Christ. The sword is coming. Judgment day is fast approaching. If you refuse to flee to Christ for refuge, if you will not take heed to God's warning, you shall die in your sins. And in Hell you shall suffer the infinite wrath of Almighty God, forever. This is my commission, and this is my burden, to preach Christ and warn the wicked.

(Mark 16:15-16) "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Here is the line in the sand that our Great God has drawn. The gospel of Christ shall be one of two verdicts pronounced upon you by the King of kings; either salvation or damnation. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ, His glorious Person and finished work as the Redeemer of God's elect. Rest by faith in the covenant of grace that God has manifested by the suffering and death of His dear Son. Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you shall be saved. This is the word of God, the word of truth, God's unbreakable promise. This is God's word of life, and it is strong and dependable, a sure foundation for your soul. But God's word of death is equally strong and dependable. Believe not the gospel, and you shall be damned. You can count on it! This is a grave warning. I take this business of preaching seriously, because a verdict of judgment falls on me if I do not warn the wicked.

(Eze. 33:7-9) "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. 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. 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."

The LORD has given me what to say in order to warn the wicked, that my hands be free from your blood and my soul be delivered. My text will be v. 10-16.

1. HERE IS WHAT YOU'VE SAID – The LORD reveals the inner thoughts of His people, commanding me to speak back to you what the LORD has heard you say.

(Eze. 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?"

AMPLIFIED VERSION – ***"And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: Truly our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?"***

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You say, “If we are sinners condemned by God, how can we live? We have no ability to live. It’s impossible. There’s no hope. We might as well eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die.”

(Mal. 3:13-15) *“Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? 14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.”*

STOUT HEARTED – This is nothing less than rebellion against the LORD. You harden your heart against the sure promises of God in Christ. Instead of encouraging your heart in the LORD, you say, “What use is it to attend worship, hear the gospel, and mourn over what I am? There’s nothing I can do about it. God is sovereign. He has mercy on whom He’ll have mercy. But he hasn’t yet shown mercy to me. I might as well live in pride and live for my own pleasure like everyone else. The proud are happy and I’m miserable! What’s the use? God is out to get me! God is just laughing at me, taking pleasure at the expense of my misery.”

Your words are stout against the LORD! You falsely accuse God! God is not a tyrant. God is good.

2. HERE’S WHAT GOD SAYS – Don’t put your wicked thoughts in the mouth of God.

(Eze. 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?”*

- * **GOD IS LONG-SUFFERING** – God swears on His own life that He has no pleasure, no satisfaction in the death of the wicked. God is long-suffering and kind. He is willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, but He’s long-suffering with sinners, that He might show forth the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.

(Ps. 145:8-9) *“The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.”*

You cannot view the crucified LORD without seeing that He’s long-suffering and of great mercy. Christ gave Himself into the hands of wicked men to be scourged, beaten, mocked and spat upon. He was stripped naked and nailed in shame to the cursed tree. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But God is well pleased with the death of His dear Son. God has pleasure in mercy.

- * **GOD IS CALLING** – God delights to show mercy! The Savior said, *“...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:10).”* God calls on you to repent and believe the gospel. God takes pleasure in His people that believe! He will have no pleasure if you die, but that you turn from your evil way and live. There is joy in Heaven over the sinner who repents and believes the gospel.
- * **TURN FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS** – Why will you die? The LORD says twice, “Turn back, turn back!” God gives two very clear instructions for the wicked, which are found throughout His word.

SEEK THE LORD, AND CALL UPON HIS NAME

(Isa. 55:6-9) *“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

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SEEK THE LORD – Seek and you shall find. Seek the LORD while He may be found. But in order to seek the LORD, you must forsake your way and your thoughts. Your way is wrong and your thoughts are unrighteous. What best describes the evil way of man, or the unrighteous of his thoughts?

(Prov. 16:25) “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

The wrong way is that way which seems right to you. If it seems right to you, if you think it, it's wrong. God's word is truth! God's word is our only wisdom and light in this dark world. For example, you think that God will not have mercy on you. You think very little of God. But God says, “Return unto me and I will have mercy upon you. I will abundantly pardon.” His thoughts are not our thoughts. Our ways are not His ways. Look up at the stars on a dark night and see how high His ways and His thoughts are higher than ours. Seek the LORD, by hearing the gospel and studying His word. Seek understanding from Him. Ask for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. When the LORD was about to go to the cross, He told His disciples...

(Jn. 14:4-6) “And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

If you know Christ, you know the way; not if you know about Christ, not if you know all the right dogma, but if you know Christ the Person in the forgiveness of your sins. Seek Him personally, intimately! Anything less than a personal knowledge of the Son of God is to go in the way that leads to destruction. He that has the Son has life! He that has not the Son has not life! Forsake your way and seek to know Christ. Seek and you shall find.

(Jer. 29:11-14) “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD...”

CALL UPON THE LORD – Return unto the LORD! Go and pray unto Him. Speak to the LORD in secret, in a quiet place. Go into a closet and shut the door. Commune with God privately.

(Hos. 14:1-2) “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”

Don't deceive yourself into thinking that you're seeking the LORD if you will not pray to Him. With the heart man believes unto righteousness, trusting Christ alone as all his righteousness. And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Take with you words! Say to the LORD, “LORD, away all iniquity and receive me graciously, and I'll praise you for your grace. God be gracious to me for Christ's sake! Let the blood of your Son take away all my iniquity!”

(Ps. 51:1-7) “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

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Hyssop was used by the priest in the Old Testament to ceremonially cleanse the leper. He would take two live birds, cedar wood, scarlet and some hyssop. One bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water. Then the live bird, with the cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop was dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed over running water. And the priest would sprinkle the leper seven times and pronounce him clean. Then the priest would let the living bird go free in an open field.

- Only Christ, the Great High Priest, can purge you with hyssop and take away your iniquity.
- Only His precious blood, applied by His hand directly to your heart, can make you clean.
- Only Christ by the power of His grace can set you free.
- Come to Christ! Seek the LORD while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.

3. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

God commands me to say to the wicked, "Turn from your evil ways, for why will you die?" And the next words in v. 12-16 show us exactly what God means by turning. He means for us to trust His dear Son.

(Eze. 33:12-16) "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. 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. 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; 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. 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."

- * **PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS** – God demands absolute perfection. The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression. You must be perfect to be accepted.

(James 2:10) "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

(Rom. 10:5) "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

God says to the righteous, to the man or woman who seeks to be righteous by doing good deeds, "Do the law and live." But if you trust to your own righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of your righteousness shall be remembered. But for your iniquity that you've committed you shall die.

(Matt. 7:21-23) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

What is the will of the Father? What does God demand? He demands our perfection, and this can only be in the Person of His dear Son. The will of the Father is that you believe on His Son. Turn from your evil ways, from the iniquity of your self-righteousness. You cannot come to Christ if you have something good to offer. You can say, "Lord, Lord," with your lips, but your heart is far from Him.

(Isa. 46:12-13) "Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: 13 I bring near my righteousness..."

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- * **THERE'S MERCY FOR THE WICKED** – There's hope for a wicked man, if he turns from his wickedness. I as stated earlier, the wicked are those without Christ. The wicked are unforgiven. The wicked are yet in their sins. The wicked are cursed by the law and condemned to die. God sees every man outside of Christ as wicked. And in the context of this passage, the wicked are stouthearted and self-righteous. Turn from your wickedness. Turn and do that which is lawful and right. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.

(Eze. 33:14-16) "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; 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. 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."

- Christ alone has done that which is lawful and right. He fulfilled the law by His perfect obedience.
- Christ alone has restored the pledge or paid the debt. He satisfied God's justice on the tree.
- Christ alone gave back what we robbed from God. He glorified the Father!
- By faith in Christ alone we walk in the statutes of life. Christ is our Life! Christ is ALL!

(Eph. 2:8-9) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Christ is all and we're complete in him. We cannot commit iniquity, trusting Christ alone. Our righteousness in Him is the righteousness of God. We are equal with God in the Person of His dear Son. God's righteousness is ours in Christ. His righteousness is everlasting and incorruptible.

EXAMPLE: How good do you have to be to go to heaven? You must be as good as God Himself. In Christ we're as good as God. We're accepted in the Beloved.

- In Christ our sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more. They'll never be mentioned. God has cast them into the sea of forgetfulness. They've been removed from us as far as the east is from the west.
- In Christ God says to me, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. You've done that which is lawful and right. You shall surely live."

What would you do to have all your sins forgiven? What would you give to be accepted of God and blessed forever? Do nothing and give nothing! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Trust the Son of God, and Christ has done it all and given all for you. Faith is the gift of God to His elect, because Christ died for us. He gave Himself for us. How do we know this? We believe Him.

(Gal. 1:3-5) "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."