



The Watchman's Warning

Ezekiel 33:1-11

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Eze 33:1-11 NKJV] 1 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, 3 'when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4 'then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. 5 'He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. 6 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.' 7 "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 "Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. 10 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?" ' 11 "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

ILLUSTRATION

On April 14, 1912, the "unsinkable ship," the Titanic, sank to the bottom of the ocean after hitting an iceberg. More than 1500 lives were lost. Just this last week, five more were lost in a tragic submarine accident.

- For years, historians, engineers, specialists, and scientists have tried to piece together the factors that led to this catastrophic event. The reality is that many factors were all woven together; any of those could have changed the outcome.
- But two factors struck me this week as I was reading a bit on the subject:
 - First, the Titanic received an iceberg warning from another nearby ship. The radio operator considered the warning "non-urgent" and never delivered it to the captain.
 - Second, seemingly small, was that no binoculars were accessible to the crew. The key to the binoculars was never acquired before leaving. This means no one was carefully watching the water for potential hazards.
- There, of course, were many other factors involved, but when I read those two, I couldn't help but think, ***"God, please help the church not be like the Titanic, unprepared, unwatchful, and unwilling to heed the warning signs of the decaying culture around us."***

ISSUE

Last week I wrote a letter to our city council discouraging them from nominating Brian Kirk, the pastor at First Christian Church in Saint Joseph, for the role of vice president of the Saint Joseph Public Library Board or Directors.

- Brian Kirk is an active and outspoken advocate for the LGBTQ movement in Saint Joe and a board member of PFLAG, a gay rights association with a very public and blatant mission to bring the LGBTQ agenda into every sphere of our city's culture. PFLAG sponsored the drag queen reading hour in 2019 at the Saint Joseph public library and openly advocates for gender-affirming care (also known as mutilative surgery) to be available to every age.
- Brian has spoken on LGBTQ issues in at least one of our public high schools.

- His "Church" has held queer revival events with the slogan, "Queerness is next to godliness," and at least one drag queen show promoting the local LGBTQ scene.

These are not conspiracy theories or assumptive ideas; these are very public items that are easily accessible online.

We live in a free country. People have the right to believe what they want to believe, speak as they want to speak, and live with the consequences of those beliefs. But for the Christian, there has to be a line when we say, **"Enough is enough. Stop the indoctrination. Stop the forceful feeding of demonic ideas and doctrines to our children through our public institutions!"**

Now, to the visitor this morning, or the searcher, or maybe even the person who is in the lgbtq+ lifestyle, who is thinking, "Oh great! Another homophobic, narrow-minded, bigot pastor," I'd like to ask you to hear the full context of my message this morning. You may still go away believing the same things as you came in, but you need to know that I don't hold even an ounce of hate, bitterness, or fear toward gay or trans people. How could I hate anyone when Jesus showed me love, grace, and forgiveness?

Believe it or not, we love you. We want God's best for you. You are welcome here without reservation as you honestly explore the questions you may have about faith, God, the Bible, and Christianity. We believe the greatest way to love another person is to tell them the truth about what God says about Himself and about them, hoping that the truth will lead a person to repentance and trust in Jesus Christ to enter into the life Christ desires for them.

Yes, we do not believe homosexual practice is conducive to biblical Christianity, but we also do not believe that homosexual desires or tendencies disqualifies you from Christ's family. On the contrary, if you struggle with sin, you are in good company, for that is every Christian. The sin of homosexuality is not greater than other sins. Jesus Christ came to die for sin and save sinners.

But for one to come to the place of true faith, they must first understand their natural state before God. They must first be willing to acknowledge, "I am lost, I am wrong, and I have failed." It's at that place where God's grace meets us, heals us, forgives us, and restores us.

Why, then to we take a stand against the LGBTQ agenda and lifestyle? Because we believe that the Bible clearly teaches that it is morally wrong, that it damages and confuses those who are caught up in it, and that it ultimately leads a person to greater pain, confusion, depression, and emptiness. You may very well wholeheartedly disagree with that, but please acknowledge that if the things I said are true, wouldn't it be a loving thing to try and show people a better way?

The Bible seems to think so.

A WEIGHTY RESPONSIBILITY

Talk about a weighty responsibility. Ezekiel 33 is pretty much a word-for-word reminder of the initial calling he received in chapter 3. Ezekiel was about 30 years old when he received this call. Until that point in his life, he had been in training in the temple. Born into a priestly cast of thousands, his responsibilities would have been lighting candles, making bread, blowing the trumpets, and arranging wood on the altar, but God had a far more important mission for Ezekiel... The LORD effectively tells Ezekiel, "I'm giving you a job, and by the way, if you refuse to do that job and others suffer because of your refusal, I'm holding you responsible." Ok, Lord, what's the job? "Watch and listen. When you see danger and hear My word, deliver it as a watchman to both the righteous and the wicked."

Ezekiel was called to be the watchman on the wall. In ancient times city walls provided **perspective** and **protection**. The walls had no windows for people to know what was happening outside. There had to be those called to stand at the top of the walls and keep watch over the land and what was going on in the distance. The watchmen provided the city an aerial view of what was going on in the surrounding countryside. And when they spotted danger, it was the watchman's duty to quickly blow the trumpet, and sound the alarm!

- I'm not convinced that Ezekiel didn't reluctantly accept this call! But this call was needed. It was a dark time for Israel.
- I want to say something unapologetically. It seems like it should be common knowledge, but in practicality, it would seem that very few people understand this:

QUOTE

“*The true Church of Jesus Christ and its leaders are the watchman God has called in these last days.*”

Every Christian is to be a spiritual lookout, and we each have our place on the wall. Together as the church, we are to be that clarion call when danger lurks, when the truth is shrowded, and confusion prevails!

QUOTE

“*"The church is the watchman upon the walls of Zion, and to neglect her duty would be to endanger the cause of truth and weaken the hands of the feeble-minded."*

Charles Spurgeon

1 A Watchman needs eyes that SEE

BIBLE PASSAGE

'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, 3 'when he sees the sword coming upon the land,

TO SEE

As God's watchman, the church is called to have spiritual discernment and cultivate a keen awareness of the spiritual condition of the church and society. The Bible calls us to have a watchful attitude and recognize the signs of moral, social, and spiritual decline.

[2Ti 4:5 NKJV] 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

[1Pe 4:7 NKJV] 7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

[1Th 5:5-6 NKJV] 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others [do], but let us watch and be sober.

A WE NEED TO SEE THE STATE OF OUR CULTURE

Ezekiel's ministry as a watchman wasn't glamorous and often came at great personal sacrifice. But he was to be an example of God's feelings about the wickedness prevailing in Israel's culture.

- And while I pray that none of us have to lay on our side for a year, the greater point is that Ezekiel had to confront the societal ills that broke God's heart.
 - When something in his culture was exposed, he was obligated to communicate that regardless of whether or not anyone listened to, received, or mocked him.
 - When there are things culturally that are keeping people blinded in their sin and hardening their hearts and consciences to the things of God, the Christian must take a stand and declare the difference between good and evil, right and wrong.
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B. WE NEED TO SEE THE REALITY OF GOD'S JUSTICE

When Paul was in Athens, speaking the gospel to the philosophers of the day, he spoke of the idolatry that people had practiced to try and find out who God was.

[Act 17:29-31 NKJV] 29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

What we learn here is that:

- a. Man is created in the image of God, but because of their fallen sin nature, they will seek to worship a god that they create rather than the true God.
- b. Now that God has clearly revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ, there is no excuse.

- c. All people are called to repent (to change one's mind and direction) and trust in Jesus for their salvation.
- d. The reason is that there is a real day in the future when Jesus will return as the rightful judge who will righteously render justice to everyone. Those who have trusted in Christ by faith will pass from judgment. Those who rejected Christ will answer to Him for their sins.
- e. We know this is the case because Jesus conquered death forever and ascended to heaven.

Christian, do you believe this? If so, as a watchman, do you feel obligated to let people know that one day Jesus will bring a sword upon the land, and they have an opportunity now to turn to God by faith and find grace and mercy?

2 A Watchman needs a conviction to SOUND

BIBLE PASSAGE

3 'when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4 'then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. 5 'He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. 6 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'

ILLUSTRATION

Once a man visited Dwight Moody, and told him he wanted to be a great soul winner like him. Moody told the man to go to the window and tell him what he saw. He said, "I see a

street filled with traffic and pedestrians.” Moody said “Look again, and tell me what you see?” He looked a second time, and replied, “Well, I see people - men and women, boys and girls.” Finally, Moody walked to the window, and with tears in his eyes, he said, “I see people going to hell without Jesus. And until you see people like that, you will not lead them to Christ.” This is what it means to be on the wall. God wants us to have a "from the top" perspective.

APPLICATION

Here, the watchman clearly sees everything going on, and there is one of two responses. Watch as the enemy pillages and plunders, or sound the alarm!

APPLICATION

I was processing why Christians tend not to get involved in certain cultural battles or issues of righteousness in our society. In this passage, why would a watchman see something that requires his action and not blow the trumpet?

- Perhaps it's ignorance and uncertainty. They see something but don't know if it's a threat. They don't want to blow the trumpet unnecessarily. If that's the case, inaction should be remedied by knowledge. Instruct, and they will act once they see it for what it is.
- Perhaps they don't understand their role - they see the signs and know what it is, but they say, "Someone else will do it; that's not really my place." That should be remedied by simply teaching them their responsibility as a watchman on the wall.
- Finally (and this is what I find to be the case most of the time), it could simply be that the watchman is a coward. He doesn't want to blow the trumpet because it might expose him to the enemy. He doesn't want to blow the trumpet because there might be critics who disagree. He doesn't want to blow the trumpet because if he keeps quiet and hides out, the battle may pass, and he will remain unaffected.

There are far too many churches today that have taken the latter route. They say things like, ***"Well, we believe this, but we don't need to preach it from the rooftops. We don't need to tell people the truth about God, righteousness, sin, repentance, and reconciliation because***

they might think we're judgmental and bigots, but we're good because we believe it for ourselves!"

God looks at the church as a watchman and says, "I will hold you accountable for the ignorance in your community, for the unreached, for those who continued in their sin because there was no voice that warned them and gave them the hope of a better way in Christ."

Someone amongst the 300 or so comments on one of my Facebook posts wrote, ***"As a non-religious person, this makes me never want to step foot in a church ever again. Is that the goal here? I thought the goal was to get people in the door, not push people away."***

- Many Christians today, read something like that and initially agree with her.
- No, our goal is not to compromise the truth to attract people to come through the doors. Think about that for a moment. You "attract" people by minimizing sin, minimizing righteousness, minimizing repentance, and minimizing the sacrifice of Christ, and you get them to come to your church because now they feel like there's a God that fits their mold. Now what? What Christianity are you converting them to?
 - Are you turning them to a Jesus who agrees with their every natural desire? Who will never question or challenge what they feel or want? A Jesus who doesn't have any objective truth and is just a nice guy in the sky who vaguely loves and accepts everyone?
- Our hope is that people are attracted to our church when they see how we love, see how we serve, and see our commitment to Christ, but that's not our goal. Our goal is to be unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His word and to preach the everlasting Gospel.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Col 1:28-29 NKJV] 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Phi 2:15-16 NKJV] 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life...

APPLICATION

Because of today's passive Christian culture, some read this and think, "blameless and harmless, we just need to keep our mouth shut, not stir the pot, and keep everything nice and safe." NO!

- Blameless means without hypocrisy and guilt. The last thing we want is for the accusations of the enemy to stick because we are not seeking to practice the things we preach.
- Harmless - unmixed, pure as in wines or metals; of the mind, without a mixture of evil, free from guile.

Have a pure motive and heart not mixed with evil desire, selfish ambition, or some unspoken motive.

Why? Because the culture we live in is wicked and perverse, and we are the ones who are called to shine as lights of purity and truth amid the darkness. And we do so by "holding fast the word of life."

3 A Watchman need a voice to SPEAK

BIBLE PASSAGE

7 "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked

from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 "Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

APPLICATION

We need to understand that one of the ways God speaks to humanity today is through the mouthpiece of His church.

It's been said, "Some Christians are like the Arctic River - frozen over at the mouth."

The word SPEAK means to declare, converse, command, promise, or warn...

- Friends, if you for a minute think that I like controversy or that I relish the opportunity to meet a bunch of people that oppose me at city hall, think again! I want nothing more than to live a quiet, peaceable life with all godliness.
- I don't open my mouth because I like to be heard, or because I like to hear myself talk... I can't listen to my own messages because I'm so embarrassed half the time by my lack of eloquence or ability!
- I open my mouth because God has said, "You be a watchman, or you will answer to me."
- I'm sick to my stomach about Monday. I'm sick to my stomach about standing there with a megaphone proclaiming the gospel to people who hate me and are opposed to everything I stand for. I'm sick to my stomach to say something in front of the city council, which will more than likely open me to greater personal attacks in our community.
- Well, Josh, why are you doing it? Because Jesus loves them! Because Jesus is crying out through us to people, "be reconciled to God."

BIBLE PASSAGE

[2Co 5:20 NKJV] 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

APPLICATION

Why is a voice to speak so important? Why is a clarion call that cuts through the confusion so needed? BEcasue we as humans naturally gravitate away from God's truth and toward our own truth. The only thing that keeps us accountable is the truth being spoken clearly and courageously.

JC Ryle wrote, ***"Never forget that truth is of more importance to a church than peace."***

When the truth convicts an unsaved human being, it's much easier for them to call the preacher of truth hateful than it is to look in the mirror and confess that they require change.

I heard a pastor point this out, and I couldn't agree more. The more I considered it the more I am convinced that this is why Satan changes the verbiage of sexual sin. If we label sin in more acceptable terms, we don't have to feel bad about it.

- Instead of "sodomite," we'll adopt a word that means "happy," call it "gay," and adopt a symbol of God's promise to make us feel better.
- Instead of "pedophiles," we'll call them "minor-attracted persons."
- Instead of perversion, we'll call it pleasure.
- Instead of mutilation, we'll call it gender-affirming care.
- Instead of confusion, we'll call it transitioning.
- Instead of calling it a sin nature, we'll just say, "God created us this way."
- Instead of calling it shameful, we now call it pride.

And our entire culture has been conditioned to hear something like I just said, and without a second thought, call it hate speech, bigotry, homophobia, narrow-minded, unloving, and even unchristlike.

Yet, these things must be said, hoping that someone, deep in their soul, has been wrestling with these realities. They know they're empty, they know something's wrong, but they don't know how to get to the truth. When they hear the reality of their sin, and then they hear the reality of God's saving grace and forgiveness, then they humble themselves under God's hand, they will find life! They shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free!

4 A Watchman needs a heart to SAVE

BIBLE PASSAGE

0 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?" ' 11 "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

QUOTE

“ We cannot allow our disillusionment with the world to cause us to lose sight of our mission as the church. We do not see, sound, and speak to destroy but to save.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Luk 19:10 NKJV] 10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

APPLICATION

But if you celebrate homosexuality, you, too, are in sin. You are mocking God's created order; you are mocking His institution of marriage between a male and a female, which ultimately represents the relationship between Christ and his church; you are mocking God's designed guardrails and borders around human sexuality that exist to protect people.

You mock God's holiness by declaring that you know better than him. Ultimately you mock God's nature because instead of believing in God as He has divinely revealed himself, you pick and choose the parts of God that you like and recreate a God in your own image, which is idolatry.

But, If you as a Christian have bitter hate toward gay or trans people or walk in fear (phobia) of them, you are in sin. If a Christian heart is filled with hate, it must be hate for sin and the devil, who is the great deceiver.

- If God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, certainly, we should take no pleasure in their destruction either.
- Some, even within the church, fight because they want to destroy. They are fighting for the right things but fighting the wrong way.

[2Ti 2:23-26 NKJV] 23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

In the fight, for that's what it is, we need to maintain strength in our battle against sin and the devil while hoping to rescue as many out of his grip as we can along the way!

BIBLE PASSAGE

[2Ti 3:12-17 NKJV] 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

