

Ezekiel 2 and 3
Speak Truth No Matter What
J.D. Farag

KAPONO: Would you join me in a word of prayer? Lord, would You please teach us how to worship, Lord? Would You please show us, Lord? This is not a production. We don't come here to hear our favorite songs, Lord.

We don't come here to see a band, Lord; this is not a show. Would You lead us to true worship, Lord, in this time that there's so many things that is vying for our attention, Lord, trying to get us away that seem good, Lord, but we want to rely on You, Lord.

So would You teach us, Lord? Would You teach us to worship, Lord? Would You help us to look to You and praise Your name forevermore, Lord? We ask this in Your mighty name, Jesus, we say Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen! Wow!

[Applause]

That was good! Thank you, Kapono! Well, good evening and welcome. How are you doing tonight? Good? Blessed? All right. Well, I want to welcome those of you that are joining us online as well. We're so glad that you are.

Been a couple of weeks since we started in the Book of Ezekiel. We left off in *Chapter 1*. We're going to pick it up tonight, *Chapters 2 and 3*. *Chapter 2*, of course, sort of a shorter chapter, but actually, they really go together.

In fact, *Chapter 1* really goes — and you understand that there were not chapter breaks in the original, right? So they were added later, thankfully, by the way, so we have a reference point, but this is a continuing narrative of sorts, starting off with *Chapter 1* and Ezekiel's, I mean, grand and glorious vision that God knew he would need for that which God was calling him to.

And so we kind of dovetail now into *Chapter 2*, which will go ever so seamlessly and beautifully into *Chapter 3*.

And I tell you, we're in for a treat tonight. I know I say that every Thursday night, don't I? Yeah? It's okay, that's your lot. But you have treasures in heaven, just so you know.

Why don't we pray? Boy, that was really good, Kapono, thank you so much for that.

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Lord, Father in heaven, I just want to almost in continuing Kapon's heartfelt worship and prayer in that same way just approach Your throne of grace and just pray, Lord, that as You would teach us to worship, that You would also teach us by Your word. Lord, this is the bread of life, and for some of us, it is life. It's a lifeline for us.

So Lord, we come to You that way tonight. Many may be hurting tonight and struggling and weary, heavy laden. But You said that we could come to You, all of us who are weary and heavy laden and that You will satiate that need of our soul, that You would give us rest, and that Your burden is light and Your yoke is easy, and that we can cast our burdens on You, all of our cares on You, because You care for us.

Well, Lord, tonight I know there's so much that You want to show us and speak into our lives. And as You do, we want to give You our undivided attention so You can. So Lord, we're wanting to commit this time. This is our time. We're very protective of it, our time together with each other in fellowship, in worship, and now with You in Your word.

So Lord, thank You for this time. Thank You for Your word. Bless our time, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen and amen.

All right, so the two chapters that we have before us tonight, God is preparing Ezekiel for that which He is preparing for Ezekiel concerning his calling.

Now, I'll bring in *Chapter 1* just maybe a couple more times because God knew that Ezekiel would need that grand and glorious vision of Him in all of His glory because of what was ahead for Ezekiel.

Keep in mind, now he's in Babylon in all of its splendor, one of the Seven Wonders of the World with just its hanging gardens alone. And it would be easy, and sadly, many of the Jews would become so enamored with and comfortable in Babylon that when the 70 years were up, they did not want to return back to Jerusalem.

So Ezekiel, a young man at this time, by the way, some believe maybe early twenties, by virtue of the fact that he was being trained prior for priestly service in the temple before he was taken captive in to Babylon — God had other plans for him — so these plans that God has for him, well, God now needs to prepare him for that which He's prepared for him.

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What has He prepared for him?

A very intense ministry. And he's going to need to have the strength of this vision of God revealing His glory to him if he has any hope to even stand and remain steadfast in the calling of God on his life.

So this is all about preparing him, and this is what God does in our lives. He will always prepare us for that which He's preparing for us. God will never be party to us being ill-prepared for the calling that He has on our life. That's inconsistent with who God is and how God is.

So this calling — get this — it's going to be one in which Ezekiel will have to speak the truth of lamentations, mourning, and woe no matter what.

Wow! Lamentations, mourning, and woe? That's what I'm calling you to. Really? Can I — is there another choice? Isn't there, like, you know, another ministry that You could call me to that's not the ministry of speaking the truth of lamentations, mourning, and woe? Who wants that?

No, I know, Ezekiel, but don't worry. I'm going to prepare you for that which I'm calling you to. Now as we're about to see, God is going to give Ezekiel a hard message with a soft heart, and it will not be predicated upon the people rejecting it or receiving it.

This is going to be very important and germane to our understanding, and we'll see it come up throughout these two chapters, so let's jump in *Chapter 2:1*. **“And He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet.”**

Now, we left Ezekiel in *Chapter 1* on his face before the Lord. He just fell on his face before the Lord in this vision and revelation of the glory of the Lord.

And so now the Lord says to him, **“Stand on your feet [*Stand up*] and I will speak to you. Then [*Verse 2*] the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.”**

I mean, just in these first two verses, we have profound application to our own lives personally when it comes to the enabling and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. In other

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words, God will never call us to do that which He will not also package the enabling to do it because God's callings are God's enablings.

Now, this mention by Ezekiel of the Holy Spirit entering him is the Holy Spirit filling him. This is a baptism with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not just indwelling Him. The Holy Spirit is empowering him, and he's going to need it.

See, the Holy Spirit will give us the power, “dunamis” where we get our English word for dynamite. He will empower us to do that which God is calling us to do. And again, you'll forgive me for repeating myself, but Ezekiel's going to need all the power he can get, and so God's going to give it to him.

Verse 3, “And He said to me: “Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.”

Here in verse 3, just this one verse, we have one of 93 times that God addresses Ezekiel as “son of man.”

Why?

Well, here's a thought. God is sending an ordinary man among men to bring the extraordinary to men. Now, there's going to be more specificity here shortly.

Verse 4, “For they are impudent and stubborn children.”

Now, this is not a redundancy. There's a delineation between the two sort of carrying with it the idea of being stiff necked and stubborn. I know you know nothing of this. I have a Ph.D. in stubbornness. Thick headed, stiff necked. Again, I know you know nothing of this, but I'll just speak for myself.

But impudent means more like this: You just — your face — forget your hard head, which we're going to talk about more in a moment, but you're stiff necked, hard hearted, and there's this, I mean, you dig your heels in and you won't budge. Let me say it this way.

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And I — it's being unteachable, dare I say, unbreakable, where you are rebuked in your rebellion by the Lord, but instead of breaking and humbling yourself before the Lord, you stiffen your neck against the Lord. Whoa! That's a better picture of what this is about.

You know I know I shared this before. I hope you don't tire of me sharing it, but back on the mainland, my first church that I started, we had an acronym: FAT. I know this is not, you know, politically correct, but FAT. I mean FAT.

And the F stood for faithful, and the A stood for available, but the T, more importantly, stood for teachable.

You know in the — we affectionately refer to them as the pastoral epistles, Titus and Timothy, where the qualifications are laid out for elders? And there's a certain criteria that they have to meet biblically before they're entrusted into positions of leadership.

And regrettably, the translations render it poorly because it's rendered in our translations “able to teach.” That does not mean that an elder is qualified if they're able to teach. No, it means they're qualified if they're teach-able.

Did you catch that? They have to be teachable. They have to be teachable. The best teacher is the teacher that is teachable. And this is the antithesis of that. You could not teach them anything. They would not receive anything. They would, in fact, stiffen their neck more whenever they were confronted or corrected or rebuked.

[Well, so, Ezekiel] “I am sending you to them, [Thanks a lot, Lord] and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ [Now watch, verse 5] As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse — for they are a rebellious house — yet they will know [Interesting] that a prophet has been among them.”

In other words, they'll know. And don't take it personally, Ezekiel, they — it's not on you. I don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of how people's response to us is not on us. The onus is not on us.

The parable: We affectionately refer to it as the “parable of the sower,” it's really more of the parable of the soils where the farmer broadcasts the seed.

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And just like we spread the word and upon which type of soil the seed falls upon is not upon us.

It might fall on rocky ground, or the thorns and the weeds choke them out, or the well-trodden path, or it could fall on supple soil and germinate and sprout. But that's not on you.

In other words, we should never tailor or cower even in our speaking of truth based upon whether or not someone is going to receive it or not.

Listen, if I did that, I wouldn't be standing here right now. If I had to walk on eggshells and, you know, make sure, hey, don't want to, you know, rock the boat or ruffle feathers or you can use whatever metaphor you want, well, first of all, one thing will happen for sure.

My message will be shortened considerably. Like maybe it would be a two-minute message because I've had to cut a lot out because, you know, that's not going to be received. They won't receive it. They'll reject it. They won't hear it. They'll refuse it. So I better not — I better not say it.

Well, you just saved me a lot of time, especially with the Prophecy Updates. (Chuckling)

Anyway, enough of my problems.

Verse 6, “And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions. Do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks [Oh, so they're not just giving me or talking stink about me, they're giving me stink eye too] [Their words and their looks] though they are a rebellious house.”

Okay, just hang in there with me for a moment. Indulge me if you will, please.

First of all, briars, thorns, scorpions: They hurt, they sting. We've seen it before, but I think it bears repeating again as it relates to this principle of being given over to the fear of man, which the Proverb says is a trap. So now, instead of being — having a fear of the Lord, you have the fear of man.

As one wisely said, “If you fear man, you won't fear God. And if you fear God, you won't fear man.” Sorry for the spitting — just for emphasis added, I guess.

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No, think about that. Hey, I fear the Lord. I don't fear you. I'm not afraid of what you think. I only concern myself and fear: What does the Lord think?

It's that audience of one. I tell you, that's a game-changer, man, because see, now, whoa, the pressure's off because I'm not going to concern myself with their response, their looks, their criticisms, their gossiping, their false accusations.

Yeah, it might hurt, sting like a scorpion, cut like briars and thorns. I mean, we're human. But I'm not going to alter my message because it's the truth. And I'm going to speak the truth no matter what. You can look at me like dat all you want. And you can talk stink about me like dat all you want.

Yeah, it's — you know that saying we — no greater lie was ever put to song than the words: Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Come on!

I think it's better said and sung: Sticks and stones might break my bones, but words can cut right through me. And sometimes it's not just even the words, it's just the look. You know what I'm talking about?

So I have, as the pastor behind this pulpit, which is my privilege to be, this added extra benefit of being able to see your faces.

Now I want to look down when I do this so that nobody thinks (Gasp) he's talking about me because the way I was looking at him.

Actually, I was dozing off.

I love it when people say, I'm so sorry, Pastor, I just was, you know, kind of yawning and I kind of dozed off.

You know, the eyes — I'm not looking at anybody's eyes — but, you know, it's just — you know how it is, right? I think it's a spiritual thing. Those eyelids just get heavy out of nowhere all of a sudden, right?

That's the enemy; he doesn't want you to hear what God is speaking into your life. And you know how it is when you're reading the word? Listen, this is the perfect cure for insomnia. Just pull out your Bible. No, for real. Praying? Same thing.

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Why is it that when you set your foot to pray, that all of a sudden, I mean, a drowsiness out of nowhere comes on you suddenly? But, boy, when you reach for the remote, oh! No, right? Am I right? That's okay. That's okay. I'll just speak for myself. I get it.

So here's what I'm kind of — where I'm going with this. When I stand up here, and again, I'm looking down, and I see your faces, I can tell — the body language is everything, right? I'm still looking down, so...

But there are times — I'm not talking about you — but there have been times when, you know, I'm teaching something that's really hard — it's a hard teaching — it's a hard teaching to teach, let alone a hard teaching to be on the receiving end of, and I'll make the fatal mistake of sort of making eye contact with somebody for whom this was not very comfortable and well received.

I've heard the illustration that I think describes it best. When you throw a rock into a pack of dogs, the dog barks the loudest is the dog that got hit the hardest. You know what I mean? So I know — and I'll tell you, this is the Prophecy Updates in every sense of the meaning — I mean, I stand up here and I think: Oh, Lord! I got to speak it; it's the truth.

And I'm not going to be afraid of you. I don't mean you personally. I'm just being broad in that sense. I don't mean to sound mean, but I really don't care what you think.

If you want to get up and walk out and send me a vile and vicious email or post something vile and vicious on social media, guess what? You're going to give an account for that. And if our social media team deletes it or blocks you, they're doing you a favor.

You know why?

Because when you do that, God takes note of that. And if we leave that on social media, the damage that it does in sowing discord among the brethren, well, that's on you. So it's grace if we delete you. We're actually doing you a favor.

You know, I was thinking about this the other day; I had no intention of going there, but I already did. So (Chuckling) I was just thinking...

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Are we okay? I know we'll get through *Chapter 3*, but I was just thinking about this the other day. I cannot recall, and Lord knows my heart when I say this, I cannot recall at any time in my life ever posting anything vicious and vile about someone else on social media.

I mean, I guess my social media feed — we have people doing it, but the feeds, you know, I think mine's pretty boring. It's just all Jesus and Bible and, you know, there's nothing — you know, I don't have memes — I am a meme, I think. (Chuckling)

[Laughter]

Yeah, it's just. Yeah.

Let me just kind of close this file that I opened and threw out all over the place this way. When you do that, what you're doing — you're saying this — you dance to the beat of my drum, sir. I want you to walk around on eggshells around me, sir. I want you to fear what my response is going to be to you.

Ooh, how's that working out for you? And you know what's sad — and I really will close it this time — is pastors.

Please pray for pastors because this is a pressure unlike anything anyone would ever understand. Because we want to be liked. And we know we put in jeopardy that possibility when we speak the truth, no matter what the response is going to be. People get up, walk out: Fine. People send me hate email: Fine. People send letters the old-fashioned way with a stamp on the envelope through the snail mail, they call it. And the ones that are really interesting are the ones where they don't sign the letter. Oh.

So I have a file for those. It's called the rubbish can. Yeah, for real.

Ezekiel, do not be afraid of them. You fear Me. You dance to the beat of My drum, Ezekiel. You are not afraid of them. You have a reverent and wholly fear and dread of Me. You care not what they think. You care only about what I think. And you be faithful to My call on your life. That's what this *verse 6* —

Wow, that was just one verse, Pastor! We're not doing well.

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Verse 7. We'll pick it up. **"You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse..."** [We're going to see this again and again]

It doesn't matter, Ezekiel. It doesn't matter what their response is to you. **"...for they are rebellious."**

We're going to see that several times.

"But you, [Verse 8] son of man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

Take it in. This is the eating of the scroll, and it can be likened to — let me see if this helps — doubtless you've heard this saying, maybe said this yourself, "Man, I just devoured that book."

In other words, this is what Ezekiel's going to do. He's going to devour it. He's going to take it in. He is going to digest it so much so that it becomes a part of him. That's what's going on here in these two verses.

Verse 9, **"Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. Then [Verse 10] He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe."**

Oh, no, lamentations and mourning and woe.

That's what he has to take in, devour, consume, digest?

Yeah.

So *Chapter 2* ends by, again, seamlessly transitioning to *Chapter 3* where we'll now better understand the significance of this.

Chapter 3:1, **"Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."**

So [Verse 2] **I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, [I like that] and fill your stomach [I'll take that] with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness."**

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This is the sweet psalmist of Israel, David. *Psalm 119:103*: Listen. **“How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.”**

Not just oh, this is sweet like honey; no, this is sweeter than honey. This is sweeter than anything I've ever tasted before in my life.

Well, what is it?

The word of God.

So what's going on here?

Well, Ezekiel is eating the bread of life. **“Men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.”** He's satiating himself by the word of life, the bread of life, and it is sweet to his soul.

And again, God is preparing him for that which He's preparing for him because you see, Ezekiel, cannot impart that which he does not possess.

What do you mean?

Well, how am I, as a pastor, going to teach the word of God if I don't have the word of God in me? If I try, it's going to be dry. There's going to be a disconnect.

And you can tell; you guys are smart. You wouldn't let me get away with it anyway if I didn't own it. Man, I got to own this thing. Pray for me. (Chuckling) I got to own that which God would have me to speak. It's got to be real in my life.

Oh, it reminds me. Not too long ago, I shared about an acronym that I have for all of my teaching in my sermon prep, and the acronym is TALLY. I take a tally of my teaching.

And I shared this one time — it was on a Sunday morning — and I forgot the Y on tally.

And so we got flooded with emails. What's the Y? You're killing me. I'm on the edge of my seat, cliffhanger, and you forgot. I know you never do that, Pastor JD, but you digressed, you forgot the Y. Why? What's the Y?

I'll tell you what the Y is. I won't forget this time. Here's the tally. T: Is it true? Is this truth? Is this truth?

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The A: Is this applicable? Because I don't want to just stand up here and give you a bunch of information. It's been said that knowledge is information, but wisdom is the application of that information.

That's another acronym: REA. Read it, explain it, apply it. I can get up here and, you know, shake and bake and, you know, just go through all the Scriptures and if you walk out of here going, oh, man, that was cool. What does it mean to me, though? Where's the personal application? I have done you a great disservice. So is it applicable?

L, the first L: Is it loving? Is it the truth in love because of love? Is it a good representation of the God of love, not a God who has love, no God is love? Is it loving?

The second L, and this is important: Is it liberating? Let me explain.

I just, in the opening prayer, mentioned when Jesus said that **“His yoke is easy and His burden is light.”** When somebody lays a heavy burden on me, and I'm pretty sure it's not the Lord because the Lord doesn't do that. John said, **“The commands of Lord are not burdensome.”** **“His yoke is easy, His burden is light.”**

James says, **“The wisdom from above is easy to be entreated.”** And I also know this about truth, speaking the truth, no matter what: **“The truth will set you free.”** That's a principle that you don't break. It breaks you if you go up against it.

Watch this. When you've heard truth, there's a freedom that ensues. And conversely, when you've heard a lie, there is no freedom. You're all bound up. So it's the liberating truth that sets me free. It doesn't bind me up. So is it liberating?

And then here's the Y. Drum roll, please. Wait for it. Is it you? Do you own this, or is there a disconnect, Pastor? When you stand up there, is this just coming from your notes or from the heart?

Because people, especially your people, you guys, you know, rightfully and thankfully, hold my feet to the fire on that altar of my teaching, but you could tell. If I get up here and I try to just, you know, fake it till I make it through the teaching, and you too, you're going to know it.

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Oh, he's just reading his notes. He doesn't own this. God hasn't done that work in him before God can do the work through him. God hasn't spoken to him, ministered this to him to the point where He can now minister this truth through him.

God cannot do a work through you until He first does that work in you. It's been said that you can always know what the pastor's going through by what he teaches on. I mean, that is so true.

And that's actually a good thing because what it says is there's no disconnect here. I mean, I own this. God has built this into my life. God has worked this into my heart. God has had me take it in and digest it and assimilate it. So I own it. It's become a part of me. So it's real. I'm not just up here as a talking head, though sometimes it might look like that.

Verse 4, "Then He said to me: "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. For [Verse 5] you are not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, but to the house of Israel, not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you."

Did you catch that? Ezekiel, I'm sending you to Israel. And they're not going to receive it. If I were to send you to a Gentile nation, they would.

Isn't that true? It's what He's saying. If I would have sent you to foreigners, they would have listened. But I'm not sending you to foreigners. I'm sending you to the house of Israel to speak My words.

I don't know what it is; I guess I could probably draw this comparison. But there was a time, once upon a time here in America where we were the ones evangelizing the world. You know, it's harder to share the gospel in the United States than it is in other countries, foreign countries? Boy, I tell you, that's a sad day, but it's the truth.

Verse 7, "But the house of Israel will not listen to you [Thanks for the heads up] [But don't take it personally, Ezekiel] they won't listen to you because they will not listen to Me. [And here's why] For all the house of Israel are [And here it is again] impudent and hard-hearted.

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Behold [Verse 8] I have made your face strong against their faces, [Cool] and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, [Man, they're still looking at me] though they are a rebellious house."

Please, would you just give me this for just a moment? I just — this delights my heart to no end. I mean, you know what God's doing here?

He's giving Ezekiel this sanctified hard head. Yeah. Oh, he's going to need a hard head to butt heads because they're hard-headed. It's like God saying to Ezekiel: They're hard-headed. I'm going to make your head harder.

All right. That's what I'm talking about, huh?

And not only that, but the face.

I could use some help with the face. So You're going to make my face strong? What does that mean? Because I already have a pretty — (Chuckling) so what does that mean?

Now that means, again, the look, your countenance. There's going to be a strength. Because the way they're looking at you, you know that look, right? That look: Squinted eyes, nose up in the air, chest out.

How am I doing? Shall I keep going? You got the point, right?

Well, yeah, that's how they're going to be looking at you. But here's the thing Ezekiel, I'm going to give you a look too. Look right back at them. This is going to be a stare down. I'm going to stare you down with this face. (Chuckling)

God made my face this way. So take it up with Him.

Forehead strong. You want to butt heads? Let's do this. You think you're hard-headed? Ha-ha!

God made my — yeah! I'm going to stop right there. You're having way too much fun with that one.

Verse 10, "Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. And go, get to the captives, to the children of your

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people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse."

Translated: No matter what, you're going to speak it no matter what.

Now, this mention of **"here's the word that I'm going to give to you to speak; now get it to the captives,"** who are the captives?

Remember now, these are the captives in Jerusalem. They are still listening to the false prophets in Babylon, telling them, Hey, you guys don't get too settled; we're not going to be here long.

No, but Jeremiah and now Ezekiel, which, by the way, is one of the reasons God allowed Ezekiel to be taken captive along with Daniel into Babylon. He needed an Ezekiel, and He needed a Daniel in Babylon to speak the truth in the midst of all of these false prophets that were speaking lies.

What was the truth?

Well, I'm going to have to give you a hard head and a strong face, which you've already kind of got anyway, and I'm going to send you to these captives there with you to speak the truth to them, whether they refuse or whether they hear.

Because what they're hearing is false from the false prophets who were telling them that you're not going to be here for 70 years. Don't get to settled. We're going to be going back to Jerusalem pretty soon.

And by the way, at this time, at this juncture, the temple's still standing. This is early on in the 70-year captivity, and Ezekiel is still young. So they're still holding onto that, and now here's the commission, here's the call to Ezekiel: You've got to get to them and get this truth to them and speak this truth to them no matter what they do with it.

Verse 12, "Then [This is interesting] the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place!" I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise."

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This is still the vision from *Chapter 1* of the glory of God, the wheels with the throne of God, the chariot of God. And these creatures were just beyond description, unfathomable, incomprehensible, astounding, breathtaking, stunning.

Hang on to this. **“The Spirit lifted me up.”** We're going to come back to it here in a moment.

Verse 14, “So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went [Uh-oh] in bitterness.”

Wait, what happened to the sweetness? No. **“Bitterness in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.”**

In other words, Ezekiel is saying that in a reluctance, by virtue of the fact that the Spirit would have to lift him up, he didn't want to leave. I wouldn't want to leave. Are you kidding me? This is a beautiful vision.

You know how it is? Mountain top experiences, those devotions when you're just — I mean, you're worshiping the Lord. You're praising the Lord. And you don't want it to end.

But, you know, you got to go to work. And so you don't want to leave. You're reluctant to leave. And so with Ezekiel, the Holy Spirit had to get him up and take him away because he didn't want to leave. He wanted to stay right where he was at. I can't blame him.

Now we need to work through a couple of things here, the first of which has to do with not being told the reason for Ezekiel's bitterness and hot anger.

By the way, that's what this **“heat of my Spirit”** means. It was a burning, hot anger. He was angry and he was bitter.

Why?

We're not told why. To me, this seems to be a divine omission for this reason. It's so that we'll apply this and not dismiss this.

I think of the Apostle Paul with the ambiguous **“thorn in the flesh.”** So much speculation abounds. But when Scripture's silent, we would do well to be silent. It was by God's design that we don't know specifically what that thorn in the flesh was.

Why?

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Because if we knew what that thorn in the flesh was and it was not something we struggle within our lives, well, it doesn't apply to my life, and we dismiss it.

Conversely, if it's left open-ended, we can kind of fill in the blank because all of us have a thorn. And now instead of dismissing it, we can start applying it because that thorn for you might be different than the thorn for me.

But the purpose of the thorn is to keep us humbly dependent upon the Lord, so ultimately, He gets all of the glory due His holy name. That's the purpose when a thorn becomes a blessing.

So I think the reason we're not told specifically what he was so bitter and angry about is because we would be prone to dismiss it if it didn't apply to our lives.

The other thing I want to kind of work through quick here has to do with the hand of the Lord being strong upon Ezekiel. Now this is a phrase you'll find throughout Scripture, **“the heavy hand of the Lord,” “the hand of the Lord,”** an anthropomorphism, a word that makes me sound smarter than I am. It just means describing God in human terms. So Ezekiel's saying that the hand of the Lord was strong upon him.

So what does that mean? Does that mean that this is the strength of the Lord overpowering a reluctant Ezekiel, or the strength of the Lord empowering a reluctant Ezekiel?

I'm personally of the belief that it's both. It's both the overpowering, strong hand of the Lord upon a reluctant Ezekiel to get him to go as hard as it was, as difficult as it would be, as wrought with rejection as it would be, I think it would require an overpowering where the Lord just overwhelms you and overpowers you. But it's also packaged with the Lord not just overpowering you but empowering you.

He's saying to Ezekiel: Ezekiel, first of all, I'm going to enable you and empower you because the Holy Spirit is upon you and has entered you and filled you so that your life now is, as Jesus said, a life of torrents of water.

You know how powerful torrents of water are? You ever see those news reports when a flood — those waters, torrents are so powerful they're taking houses downstream like

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toothpicks. On the mainland, they harness electricity, the power, the power plants are powered by water, waterpower.

They build these huge dams to harness the power of the water. The power of the water is how they generate the electricity.

I'm totally complicating something that could be a very simple and beautiful illustration. It's a gift.

Did you get that? That's how powerful water is.

That's what I believe is happening here to Ezekiel because keep in mind, he needs that reminder, constant reminder because he's going up against powerful people, strong, a strength, and God's saying, Ezekiel, I'm going to make you stronger. Yeah, but these are powerful people. I'm going to make you more powerful and empower you with My power.

So verse 15, "Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, [This is in Babylon, modern-day Iraq, not Israel, Tel Aviv] who dwelt by the River Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days."

Why seven days?

Well, there's many thoughts as to maybe the correlation between the priestly service and preparation, but I think this is the grace and the mercy of God. Because he's giving this man of God time to process the enormity and the intensity of this situation. We call it quiet time.

Boy, I tell you, our lives are too loud. We need to turn the volume down on our loud, busy lives. I like how Kaponi prayed.

In fact, we're going to talk about this in the Prophecy Update. The Prophecy Update Sunday, Lord Willing, is titled '*What We're Distracted By and Why.*' So many things clamoring for our attention, distracting us away like Martha from Jesus.

And we can't hear the still, small, refining voice of the Holy Spirit because the business of our lives is turned up so loud. That's just how the Holy Spirit speaks. So I just got to get quiet. I just need that quiet time to just sit.

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I mean, you got to admit in all fairness to Ezekiel, I mean, how blown away is he? He's just coming off the heels of this vision, and now God's calling him and empowering him and enabling him and disclosing to him the fine print.

Oh, by the way, uh, here's your ministry: Lamentations, doom, gloom, woe, all the above. And if that's not bad enough, they're not even going to listen to you because they don't listen to Me, so they're not going to listen to you.

So yeah, God knows we need those times to be able to just kind of process the situation. That's what He's doing for Ezekiel here.

Verse 16, “Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, I have made you a watchman, [This is going to sound familiar for good reason] a watchman for the house of Israel. Therefore hear a word from My mouth and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

Yet, [Verse 19] if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.” [His blood, their blood is not on your hands]

Again, [A second way, saying the same thing, verse 20] when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him...” [Don't get stumble by the stumbling block]

This is God's way of saying that I'm not going to make a clear path for him. If he's chosen this way, then I'm not going to force him to go in the right way.

“I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.”

You know, I — let me just parenthetically say there have been so many, sadly, heartbreaking, men mightily used of God that fell, didn't finish well, and all that they had done was gone.

“The righteousness shall not be remembered.”

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What is remembered?

How they fell.

What's not remembered?

All that they had done prior.

That's just — I don't know — that gives me pause as well it should.

Verse 21, “Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”

Don't think for a moment that this is talking about eternal salvation. I'm not going to require or take back eternity because if that were the case, then that means that you could lose your salvation. Ask the Apostle Paul about it in *Acts Chapter 20*. He says, **“I'm free of the blood of all men because I did not cease from giving you the whole council of God.”**

I warned you. I taught you. So my blood is not — now it's on you. My blood is on — your blood is not on my hands. It's on you. I've done what I was supposed to do.

Well, then what does it mean if that's what it does not mean? I mean, thanks a lot, Pastor, it's like a sign in town that says this is not the way to Kaneohe. That's so helpful. Thank you so much. Can I — can I — I need a sign that says, “Here's the way.” Thank you.

What, what? There's no — that's no help to me. So if that's not what it means, then, pray tell, what does it mean?

Here's what I'm thinking, and I can scripturally support this. The requirement or being held to an account, having the blood of someone else on your hands is a forfeiting of possible rewards, not of taking away of rewards, but those rewards that you could have had you will no longer have. They will be required of you. They will be taken from you. They will be debited from your account if you will.

Does that make sense? I sure hope so; that's the best I got. Let's move on.

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Verse 25. Did we finished verse 24? Man, your pastor's losing his place so much. No, verse 22! Ho! **“Then the hand of the Lord was upon me there, and He said to me, “Arise, go out into the plain, and there I shall talk with you.”**

So I arose and went out into the plain, and behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, like the glory which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. *[I see a pattern here with Ezekiel; he's back down on his face]*

Then [Verse 24] the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet and spoke with me and said to me: “Go, shut yourself inside your house.” *[Lockdown]*

Again, verse 20, Oh, this time I went backwards now, see?

Verse 25, **“And you, O son of man, surely they will put ropes on you and bind you with them, so that you cannot go out among them.**

I will [Verse 26] make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and not be one to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious house.”

Don't get any ideas here. I know what you're thinking. I want to pray that God will stick the roof — their tongue to the roof of their mouth, so that they're — they have to close their mouth and they stop talking.

Oh, come on. Yeah. Okay, maybe it's just me.

Well, wait a minute. What? God's going to shut his mouth so he has to remain silent?

Yeah.

What's this about?

Well, this is another one of those visual prophecies to illustrate and demonstrate God's silence. Because you're not going to listen. So I'm just going to — I hate to say it like this, but for lack of a better comparison, it's almost like the silent treatment. Just remain silent. Say nothing. Speak nothing. In fact, I'm going to stick your tongue to the roof of your mouth so you can't. How about that?

Again, don't get any ideas. I know many wives would love — oh, and vice versa, too, wives, so... Oh, Lord, just stick his tongue to the roof of his mouth and...

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Verse 27; we'll wrap it up. **“But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.”**

You get the impression that they were a rebellious house? My goodness, how many times did we read it here? So the chapter ends. God doesn't remain silent long.

But there's one final takeaway, and it's this: Oftentimes the best thing to say is nothing at all unless and until the Lord makes it clear that you're to speak. I never regretted something I didn't say. I've always regretted something I did say. I've never regretted an email I didn't send. I've always regretted the email that I did send when I shouldn't have sent it.

You can't unsend. Once you click that — and texting too. And it doesn't go to who you wanted the text to go to. It goes to somebody else. (Moan)

Thank God, God's been so gracious to me because, you know... And you know, these young kids — and I'll close with this. This will be a — we'll end on a good note here.

You know, these kids these days, their thumbs are like, you know, lightning speed (bleh, bleh, bleh)

How do you do that? Here's us, right? Can you relate to this? (Hen pecking at the cell phone)

I took typing in high school: 60 words a minute, two errors. You know, I got some pride I got to deal with about —

So here I am. The keyboards, right? Remember those old keyboards? They're so loud, man. They click. I would set that thing on fire. (bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh)

Then they came out with voice-to-text. I'm like, really?

And then they come out with, you know, these — okay, I don't want to go there. I just — (Giggling to himself) Yeah. Remain silent. Don't speak. Don't send that text. Don't send that email. The best email to send is the email that you don't send because it's an email that you should not send.

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Okay. That's the end. Kapono, come on up. Why don't you stand up? We'll pray.

Don't you just love these smooth endings and closings? Wow, though, right? Whoo! I mean, if you're anything like me, and I suspect you are, I'm really convicted right now. (Chuckling) This is pretty, pretty tough. But God.

Thank You, Lord. Father in heaven, thank You so much. This is a — wow, we're starting to really get to know Ezekiel. Thank You so much for him and inspiring him to record this and have it preserved in the canon of Scripture because here we are all these generations later, and it is so apropos for us today, so many things that we can take home with us from this.

So Lord, now it's up to You to take this and by the Holy Spirit, as only You can, begin that process, as arduous as it is sometimes, of blessing it to our hearts and applying it to our lives because we want this to be real in our lives. So many things here, Lord.

So thank You so much, Lord, for feeding us and nourishing us from Your Word as we've eaten it and tasted of it and seen that You are good. Now, Lord, we just need that process of digestion as we meditate on it. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.