



### God Gives Us the Words to Speak

**Ezekiel 2:1-3:3** [The LORD] said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.” As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. He said: “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says.’ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

One of the questions I hear most often from Christians is, “Pastor, what should I say...?” What should I say to a friend who is going through a divorce? Or a neighbor who has a terminal illness? Or a cousin who has given up on worshipping God? The question of “What should I say?” is a good one because it shows their concern and their desire to bring God's grace and truth and light into the life of the ones they love. It's also a good question because it expresses a recognition that words are indeed powerful—words can cut us to the heart and turn us from sinful and self-destructive ways, words can build us up and heal us. But God's words are the mightiest of all because they have the Holy Spirit's power behind them, working through them. Elsewhere the Lord says, “Is not my word like fire ...and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29) God's Word has the power to calm hearts and change minds and bring us to Christ. However, if we're not careful the question of, “What should I say?” can also lead us down the wrong path of thinking that it is incumbent upon ME to say just the right thing at just the right time to achieve the desired result.

The prophet Ezekiel didn't have to wonder about what words he should say to his fellow-Israelites because God promised to give him the very words to speak. In this case they would be words of rebuke that many of his countrymen would not care to hear. The Lord illustrated his promise in this vision by showing Ezekiel a scroll full of “words of lament and mourning and woe” and ordering him to eat it, to take it within himself. Despite the bitter words it contained, he records that the scroll tasted like honey in his mouth, meaning that when love demands it, it is a delight to speak even difficult words that come from the Lord because they are words of power and truth by which his Spirit does his heart-changing work.

We may wish that God would speak to us directly as he promised to do for Ezekiel, but in the “scroll” of the sacred Scriptures we have God's same words recorded for us there that are no less certain or relevant or sweet than the words he gave his prophet. In the Bible we have the words of the Apostles and Prophets and of our Lord Jesus Christ himself—the right words that speak to every situation of life and every person we meet: for the hurting, for the desperate, for the rebellious and the wandering. We don't need to add our own words or ideas or come up with “just the right things” to say to give them the right flavor. When we speak what God says to each individual's circumstances, his truth is sufficient, his ways are eternal, his words work wonders. Even when it feels awkward, when the words are so difficult to speak you can barely get them out, you will find that as often as you speak the Spirit's words they will taste as sweet as honey on your tongue.

Prayer: Lord God, more and more fill my eyes, my ears, my heart, and my mind with your sacred Word so that by familiarizing myself with the Scriptures I am made capable and courageous to speak your words of spirit and truth in every situation, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen.