

Ezekiel 33:1–33 – The Watchman, God’s Heart, and Our Response

Ezekiel 33 is a turning point in this book. Jerusalem has fallen. The warnings that sounded impossible are now history. In this chapter, God recommissions Ezekiel and uses the picture of a watchman to show Israel—and us—what it means to be responsible before Him.

1. The Watchman on the Wall (Ezekiel 33:1–9)

God tells Ezekiel to speak to the people using a familiar image: a watchman on the city wall.

If the people appoint a watchman and he sees an invading army coming, he has one job: blow the trumpet and warn the city. If he sounds the alarm and the people ignore him, they are responsible for what happens next. Their blood is on their own heads.

But if the watchman sees the danger and stays silent—if he refuses to blow the trumpet—then the people still die in their sin, but God will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.

Then God looks Ezekiel in the eye, so to speak, and says:

“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.” (Ezekiel 33:7, NKJV)

Ezekiel is not responsible for how people respond. He *is* responsible to faithfully pass on what God says.

God applies this especially to warning the wicked:

“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.” (Ezekiel 33:8, NKJV)

But if he warns them and they refuse to turn, they still die in their sin, but he has delivered his own soul.

Practical Application

Every follower of Jesus today has a “watchman” role in some sense. God has placed you where you are—family, workplace, neighborhood, friendships—with people who need to hear His truth.

Our job is not to force, manipulate, or argue people into the kingdom. We are called to bear witness:

- To the reality of judgment
- To the offer of mercy
- To the hope found in Jesus Christ

What people *do* with that witness is between them and God. But we are called to lovingly and clearly sound the warning and share the good news.

Challenge for Believers

Are you silent where God has called you to speak?

- Is there someone in your life you know God has laid on your heart, and yet you have been putting it off, afraid of rejection or conflict?
- Are you more worried about being liked than about their eternal destiny?

God does not ask you to save anyone. That is His work. But He does call you to be faithful as a watchman—to lovingly tell the truth, to point people to Christ, and to trust the Holy Spirit with the outcome.

2. God's Heart: "I Have No Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked" (Ezekiel 33:10-11)

The people say, "Our sins are on us. We are wasting away in them. How should we then live?" They feel trapped under the weight of their past and present rebellion.

God answers with one of the clearest statements of His heart in all of Scripture:

"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?"
(Ezekiel 33:11, NKJV)

God does not enjoy judgment. He does not delight in condemnation. He calls out urgently, "Turn! Turn! Why will you die?"

This shows us something vital: God is not against people; He is against sin because sin destroys the people He loves. He pleads with them to turn, not because He is weak, but because He is patient, merciful, and deeply loving.

Practical Application

Many people have swallowed the lie that God is harsh, cold, or indifferent—that He almost enjoys punishing. This verse rips that lie to shreds.

- If you have wandered far, God is *not* shrugging His shoulders, waiting to crush you.
- He is calling you to turn because He *wants* you to live.
- He does not find pleasure in your destruction; He desires your rescue.

And for believers: if this is how God feels about the wicked, how should we feel? If God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, how can we be indifferent about the lost, or secretly satisfied when people "get what they deserve"?

Challenge for Believers

Ask God to give you His heart:

- A heart that grieves over sin, but also aches for sinners
- A heart that longs to see people turn and live
- A heart that prays rather than criticizes, that intercedes rather than mocks

3. Personal Responsibility: Present Reality Matters (Ezekiel 33:12–20)

God corrects a twisted way of thinking among the people. They are essentially saying, “God isn’t fair.”

He answers by saying, in effect, “I deal with people according to where they stand with Me *now*.”

- If a righteous person turns to sin and abandons God, their past righteousness will not protect them if they persist in that sin.
- If a wicked person turns from their wickedness, does what is right, and returns to God, their past sins will not be remembered.

“None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.” (Ezekiel 33:16, NKJV)

The people say, “The way of the Lord is not fair.” God replies, “No—your ways are not fair. I will judge every one of you according to his ways.”

God is not arbitrary. He is not playing games with people’s lives. He is perfectly just and perfectly merciful. He takes seriously how we respond to Him.

Practical Application

This confronts two dangerous attitudes:

1. **Presumption:**

“I did some good things in the past; I prayed once; I went to church years ago; that should be enough.”

God says, in effect, “Do not trust in your past religious experiences while you are presently choosing sin.”

2. **Despair:**

“My sins are too many. My past is too dark. It is too late for me.”

God says, “If you turn, I will not mention your sins again. They will not be remembered against you.”

Challenge for Believers

Where are you *today* with God?

- Are there sins you are excusing because of your “spiritual history”?
- Are you relying on your past service, your knowledge, your reputation, instead of walking humbly and obediently with the Lord right now?

God is calling you to a present, living obedience—not a faith that only exists in your memories.

4. The News from Jerusalem and the Stubborn Heart (Ezekiel 33:21–29)

In the twelfth year of their captivity, a survivor from Jerusalem arrives in Babylon and announces: “The city has been struck down.”

Ezekiel had already prophesied this would happen. That very evening, God had opened Ezekiel’s mouth after a period of enforced silence. Now the report from Jerusalem confirms that God’s word has come true.

Yet even after all this, those left in the ruins of the land are still talking proudly:

“Abraham was one, and he inherited the land; but we are many; the land has been given to us as a possession.” (Ezekiel 33:24, NKJV)

In other words: “Abraham was only one man and God gave him this land. We are many, so surely God must give it to us.”

But God exposes the reality of their lives:

- They were eating meat with the blood still in it, breaking God’s law.
- They were lifting their eyes to idols.
- They were shedding blood.
- They were committing sexual immorality and oppressing others.

And yet, they expected God to bless them and secure their claim to the land.

God’s answer is clear: judgment will continue until the land lies desolate, *then* they will know that He is the Lord.

Practical Application

This is a warning against claiming God’s promises while ignoring God’s commands.

It is possible to:

- Use spiritual language
- Quote Scripture
- Claim covenant blessings

...while living in open rebellion against God. That disconnect is deadly.

Challenge for Believers

Are you claiming God's promises while knowingly ignoring His will in some area of your life?

- Clinging to "God will bless me" while refusing to repent of bitterness, greed, sexual sin, dishonesty, or idolatry of any kind
- Assuming spiritual privilege while despising spiritual obedience

God's grace in Jesus is not a license to sin; it is the power and freedom to walk in newness of life.

5. Hearing vs. Doing: When Church Becomes Entertainment (Ezekiel 33:30–33)

God tells Ezekiel something sobering about the people's attitude toward his ministry:

"Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them." (Ezekiel 33:32, NKJV)

The people talk about Ezekiel. They invite one another, "Come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord." They sit in front of him as if they were truly God's people. They listen. They nod. They admire his delivery.

But their hearts are somewhere else. They are chasing their own covetous desires. They enjoy the experience of hearing God's word—but they have no intention of obeying it.

God says, "When what you have spoken comes to pass—and it will surely come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

Practical Application

This is painfully relevant.

It is possible to:

- Enjoy sermons
- Appreciate solid teaching
- Take notes
- Talk about the message afterward

...and yet never actually submit to the truth being preached.

We live in a time when teaching, podcasts, videos, and resources are more accessible than ever. We can listen to gifted preachers and teachers every day if we want. But exposure to truth is not the same as obedience to truth.

James writes:

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22, NKJV)

Self-deception happens when we mistake listening for obeying.

Challenge for Believers

Ask yourself honestly:

- Do I treat God's word like spiritual entertainment—something interesting to listen to but optional to obey?
- Is there anything God has been clearly speaking to me about that I keep pushing off, even while I continue to listen to more messages?

The measure of spiritual health is not how many sermons we hear, but how much we humbly obey.

Invitation: Turn and Live Through Jesus Christ

Ezekiel 33 gives us a sober picture:

- A holy God who judges sin
- A patient God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked
- A loving God who urges, "Turn, turn from your evil ways; for why should you die?"

That call finds its fullest expression in Jesus Christ.

God did not merely send a prophet to warn us; He sent His Son to save us.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross, bearing our sins in our place. He took the judgment we deserved so that we could be forgiven. His resurrection from the dead declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. Through Him, God offers full pardon and a new life.

The same God who spoke through Ezekiel says to you today:

- You do not have to die in your sins.
- Your past does not have to define your future.
- If you turn to Him, He will not remember your sins against you.

"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13, NKJV)

If You Have Never Surrendered to Christ

You can respond to God right now. There is no formula that saves you; it is your heart turning to Him in trust and surrender. But you might express it in a simple prayer like this:

"Lord God, I know I have sinned against You. I am guilty, and I cannot save myself. But I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and that He rose again. I believe His blood was shed to save me. I confess that Jesus is Lord. I turn from my sin and surrender my life to You. Please forgive me, change me, and make me Yours. In Jesus' name, amen."

If that reflects your heart, then right now is the time to turn and live.

For Believers

Let Ezekiel 33 stir you in three ways:

1. As a Watchman – Ask God to renew your courage to speak the truth in love.
2. As a Child of God – Ask Him to search your heart for any area where you are only a hearer and not a doer.
3. As a Partner in His Heart – Ask Him to give you His compassion for those who are far from Him.

God is still saying, “Turn and live.” May we be found faithful to echo His heart in our generation.