

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This chapter contains more particular instructions to the prophet. It begins with repeating his appointment to his office, Ezekiel 3:1-3. Ezekiel is then informed that his commission is, at this time, to the house of Israel exclusively, Ezekiel 3:4-6; that his countrymen would pay little regard to him, Ezekiel 3:7; that he must persevere in his duty notwithstanding such great discouragement; and he is endued with extraordinary courage and intrepidity to enable him fearlessly to declare to a disobedient and gainsaying people the whole counsel of God, Ezekiel 3:8-11. The prophet is afterwards carried by the spirit that animated the cherubim and wheels, and by which he received the gift of prophecy, to a colony of his brethren in the neighborhood, where he remained seven days overwhelmed with astonishment, Ezekiel 3:12-15. He is then warned of the awful importance of being faithful in his office, Ezekiel 3:16-21; commanded to go forth into the plain that he may have a visible manifestation of the Divine Presence, Ezekiel 3:22; and is again favored with a vision of that most magnificent set of symbols described in the first chapter, by which the glorious majesty of the God of Israel was in some measure represented, Ezekiel 3:23. See also Isaiah 6:1-13; Daniel 10:5-19; and Revelation 1:10-16; Revelation 4:1-11, for other manifestations of the Divine glory, in all of which some of the imagery is very similar. The prophet receives directions relative to his future conduct, Ezekiel 3:24-27.

Verse 1

Eat this roll, and go speak - This must have passed in vision; but the meaning is plain. Receive my word - let it enter into thy Soul; digest it - let it be thy nourishment; and let it be thy meat and drink to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven.

Verse 3

It was in my mouth as honey - It was joyous to me to receive the Divine message, to be thus let into the secrets of the Divine counsel, and I promised myself much comfort in that intimate acquaintance with which I was favored by the Supreme Being. In Revelation 10:10 we find St. John receiving a little book, which he ate, and found it sweet as honey in his mouth, but after he had eaten it, it made his belly bitter, signifying that a deep consideration of the awful matter contained in God's word against sinners, which multitudes of them will turn to their endless confusion, must deeply afflict those who know any thing of the worth of an immortal spirit.

Verse 5

Thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech - I neither send thee to thy adversaries, the Chaldeans, nor to the Medes and Persians, their enemies. Even these would more likely have hearkened unto thee than thy own countrymen.

Verse 7

Impudent and hard-hearted - "Stiff of forehead, and hard of heart." - Margin. The marginal readings on several verses here are very nervous and very correct.

Verse 12

Then the Spirit took me up - This, as Calmet remarks, has been variously understood.

1. An impetuous wind carried him to the place where his brethren sojourned.

2. The Holy Spirit, which filled his heart, transported him in a moment to the place where the captives were.

3. Or, he was so transported with heavenly ardour in his mind, that he ran immediately off, and seemed to fly to the place where God commanded him to go.

The promptitude and impetuosity of his spirit seemed to furnish him with wings on the occasion. However this may be understood, the going to the captives was real.

A voice of a great rushing - This was the noise made by the wings of the living creatures that formed the chariot of Jehovah. See the notes on Ezekiel 1 (note) and Ezekiel 10 (note).

Blessed be the glory of the Lord - Probably the acclamation of the living creatures: "Let God be blessed from the throne of his glory! He deserves the praises of his creatures in all the dispensations of his mercy and justice, of his providence and grace."

A great rushing - All the living creatures and the wheels being then in motion.

I went in bitterness - Being filled with indignation at the wickedness and obstinacy of my people, I went, determining to speak the word of God without disguise, and to reprove them sharply for their rebellion; and yet I was greatly distressed because of the heavy message which I was commanded to deliver.

I came to them of the captivity - Because the hand of the Lord was strong upon him and supported him, he soon reached the place.

Tel-abib - x^axœ x^xxTMx^ʿ âœœa heap of corn.âœ• So the Vulgate: acervum novarum frugum, âœœa heap of new fruits.âœ• (letola chib). âœœeto the hill Chib.âœ• or the hill of grief. - Syriac.

Seven days - Perhaps God kept him all this time without an immediate revelation, that the bitterness and heat of spirit of which he speaks above might be subdued, and that he might speak God's words in God's own Spirit. Had he gone in a better spirit he had probably been employed in his work as soon as he had gained the place of labor.

I have made thee a watchman - The care and welfare of all this people I have laid on thee. Thou must watch for their safety, preach for their edification, and pray for their eternal welfare. And that thou mayest be successful, receive the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

God is particularly jealous lest any words but his own be taught for Divine doctrines. He will not have human creeds, no more than Traditions, taught instead of his own word. No word can be successful in the salvation of sinners but that which comes from God. Every minister of the Gospel should be familiar with his Maker by faith and prayer; God will then hold communion with his spirit; otherwise, what he preaches will be destitute of spirit and life, and his hackneyed texts and sermons, instead of being the bread from heaven, will be like the dry mouldy Gibeonitish crusts.

Thou shalt surely die - That is, If he turn not from his wickedness, and thou givest him not warning, as above, he shalt die in his iniquity, which he should not have committed; but his blood will I require at thy hand - I will visit thy soul for the loss of his. O how awful is this! Hear it, ye priests, ye preachers, ye ministers of the Gospel; ye, especially, who have entered into the ministry for a living, ye who gather a congregation to yourselves that ye may feed upon their fat, and clothe yourselves with their wool; in whose parishes and in whose congregations souls are dying unconverted from day to day, who have never been solemnly warned by you, and to whom you have never shown the way of salvation, probably because ye know nothing of it yourselves! O what a perdition awaits you! To have the blood of every soul that has died in your parishes or in your congregations unconverted laid at your door! To suffer a common damnation for every soul that perishes through your neglect! How many loads of endless woe must such have to bear! Ye take your tithes, your stipends, or your rents, to the last grain, and the last penny; while the souls over whom you made yourselves watchmen have perished, and are perishing, through your neglect. O worthless and hapless men! better for you had ye never been born! Vain is your boast of apostolical authority, while ye do not the work of apostles! Vain your boast of orthodoxy, while ye neither show nor know the way of salvation! Vain your pretensions to a Divine call, when ye do not the work of evangelists! The state of the most wretched of the human race is enviable to that of such ministers, pastors, teachers, and preachers.

But let not this discourage the faithful minister who teaches every man, and warns every man, in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect to Christ Jesus. If after such teaching and warning they will sin on, and die in their sins, their blood will be upon themselves; but thou, O man of God, hast delivered thine own soul.

When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness - Which these words plainly state he may do, and commit iniquity and die in his sin; and consequently die eternally, which is also here granted; if he have not been warned, though he die in his sin, the blood - the life and salvation, of this person also will God require at the watchman's hand. Pastor hunc occidit, quia eum tacendo morti tradidit. "This man the pastor kills; for in being silent, he delivers him over to death." - Gregory. From these passages we see that a righteous man may fall from grace, and perish everlastingly. Should it be said that it means the self-righteous, I reply, this is absurd; for self-righteousness is a fall itself, and the sooner a man falls from it the better for himself. Real, genuine righteousness of heart and life is that which is meant. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.

And I lay a stumbling-block before him - That is, I permit him to be tried, and he fall in the trial. God is repeatedly represented as doing things which he only permits to be done. He lays a stumbling-block, i.e., he permits one to be laid.

Verse 22

Arise, go forth into the plain - Into a place remote from observation and noise; a place where the glory of God might have sufficient room to manifest itself, that the prophet might see all its movements distinctly.

Verse 24

The spirit - said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house - Hide thyself for the present. The reason is immediately subjoined.

Verse 25

They shall put bands upon thee - Thy countrymen will rise up against thee; and, to prevent thy prophesying, will confine thee.

Verse 26

I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth - I will not give thee any message to deliver to them. They are so rebellious, it is useless to give them farther warning.

Verse 27

I will open thy mouth - When it is necessary to address them again, thou shalt sum up what thou hast said in this one speech: Thus saith the Lord, "He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear." Let him who feels obedience to the voice of God his interest, be steadfast. Let him who disregards the Divine monition go in his own way, and abide the consequences.