

CONSIDER THE PROPHETS

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James 5:7-11

1. James was writing to people for whom life was not easy.
2. He encouraged them to manifest patience and to maintain unity in the face of ongoing trials and mistreatment.
3. In verses 9-10 they were told to take, to consider and think about, the Old Testament prophets as an example of suffering and patience.
“[As] an example of suffering and ill-treatment together with patience, brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord [as His messengers].” (AMP)
NOTE: There are some prominent preachers who are currently suggesting that the Old Testament is no longer relevant; an idea that is found nowhere in the New Testament.
4. Over the last few weeks we have been considering some of the prophets, and going forward we will continue to focus on the prophetic books of Ezekiel through Malachi.
5. This morning we will deal with three passages from the book of Ezekiel that should be instructive and encouraging for us.
6. Ezekiel’s ministry overlapped that of Jeremiah, and his ministry took place between 593 and 559 BC.
7. While Jeremiah’s ministry took place primarily in Judah and Jerusalem, Ezekiel was God’s prophet to the Jews who had been exiled to Babylon during the Babylonian conquest of the Jews that took place in three stages: 605 BC, when Daniel and his friends were exiled, 597 BC, when Ezekiel and 10,000 Jews were exiled, and 586 BC, when Jerusalem was destroyed.
8. Ezekiel had been in exile several years when God called him to be His spokesperson.
9. Let’s see what we can learn from Ezekiel’s call, his challenge, and his cross.

I. Ezekiel’s call. 2:1-3:11

- A. In chapter 1 Ezekiel wrote about the heavens being opened and his vision of God.
- B. Note the progression in chapter 2.
 1. God spoke to Ezekiel and the Spirit entered him. 1-2.
 2. God commissioned him and clearly stated the difficulties he would face. 3-7
 3. God cautioned Ezekiel and extended to him the word of God. 8-10
- C. In chapter 3:1-7 Ezekiel was told to:
 1. Internalize the word of God. 1-3
 2. Speak God’s word to the house of Israel, people who should listen, but who would not listen, because they were stubborn and obstinate. 4-7
- D. Finally God told Ezekiel:
 1. I have uniquely prepared you for your task by making you more hard-headed than they are. 8-9
 2. To take into his heart all the words that God would speak to him and to listen closely. 10
 3. To speak to the exiles, to the sons of his people, and tell them, whether they listen or not, “Thus says the Lord God.” 11

E. We should take Ezekiel's call to heart because every true follower of Jesus Christ is God-appointed ambassador, called to represent God upon the earth. 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

II. Ezekiel's challenge. 33:30-33

- A. God told Ezekiel to not let apparent success go to his head.
- B. Ezekiel was the talk of the town. 30
- C. The people were not who they were representing themselves to be. 31
- D. Ezekiel was another form of entertainment to the people. 32
- E. Regardless, God would honor His word, and eventually the people would know that there had been a prophet in their midst.
- F. In this day of questionable Christianity you and I should be without question true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Ezekiel's cross. 24:15-18

- A. We should never be surprised by the things God might ask us to suffer on His behalf.
- B. The point of this passage is that whatever comes in life God has the right to expect us to carry on with what He has called us to do.
- C. Like many men of God, Ezekiel lived a lonely existence.
- D. However he had a wife who was near and dear to him.
- E. Then God laid on him an almost impossible demand.
 - 1. "Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow; but you shall not mourn and you shall not weep, and your tears shall not come."
 - 2. "Groan silently; make no mourning for the dead; rather carry on with your ministry."
- F. Note Ezekiel's response, "So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. And in the morning I did as I was commanded."
- G. Ezekiel's experience and response was to serve as an object lesson to the Jews. 19-24

APPLICATION

- 1. What amazes me about my third point is that there was no record of an argument on Ezekiel's part.
- 2. He accepted the burden that was laid upon him and carried on without complaint.
- 3. Let me close with Peter's words to his readers in 1 Peter 4:12-19
Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed,

because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? 19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.