

November 23, 2025

“Ezekiel’s Responsibility”
Lesson 3

Ezekiel 33:7-16a

Intro

Today’s passage has God speaking to Ezekiel about what He wants the prophet to say to the people. This is being said in the year that Jerusalem falls to the Babylonians (586 BC). This is the last of the three waves of exile experienced at the hands of Babylon.

Read Ezekiel 33:7-16a

1. vs. 7: God here again used the term “son of man” to refer to Ezekiel as His human spokesman
He makes Ezekiel a “watchman”—a sentinel over the spiritual life of Israel
God tells him he is a watchman “for the people of Israel”
He is not speaking of the northern 10 tribes (as opposed to Judah / Benjamin)
He is referring to those to claim to be His people
Ezekiel’s role as watchman is to hear God’s words, then deliver them to the people
This has been a primary role of Ezekiel’s job as a prophet of God
2. vs. 8: God says something to both the people and to His prophet
The people are warned that they are wicked and will die if they don’t change
Ezekiel is warned that he is not to neglect trying to turn them from these evil ways
If he does neglect this task, he will be held accountable for their deaths
He will have failed to do something God specifically told him to do
3. vs. 9: God gives the flip side of the coin from vs. 8
If Ezekiel does his job and warns the person, God will not hold him accountable
The person has been told
If they don’t change, that is no longer Ezekiel’s responsibility
4. vs. 10: God presents Ezekiel with a likely response from the people about his hard message
The people will admit that their sins are “weighing them down”
They will say they are “wasting away”—they are too weak to take action
Their response is “How then can we live?”
In other words, how can we change when we are too weak to change?
God gives Ezekiel His answer to this likely reply in the next verse
5. vs. 11: God begins by saying “as surely as I live”
This is God’s only way of taking an oath, like people do
People swear an oath by something greater than themselves
Since nothing is greater than God, he swears by Himself
This is God’s oath that He is willing and able to help the repentant person

God also notes that He does not take pleasure in the death of anyone
He desires rather that they turn away from sin and then live
Ezekiel is to show the people God desires their repentance, not their deaths
He wants the people to change

6. vs. 12: The phrase “your people” is literally “the sons of your people”

This suggests the message is all-inclusive to the multiple generations to come
This phrase only occurs 8 times in scripture, and 4 of those are in Ezekiel 33
The 2nd part of the verse is the message
Basically, it’s saying, “the past doesn’t count”
If you’ve been righteous and are now acting wicked, the past doesn’t count
If you’ve been wicked and are not being righteous, the past doesn’t count

7. vs. 13: The key word in this verse is “trust”

What a person trusts in is what determines what God will do with them
If they trust in God, they will live, meaning eternally
If they change their trust to evil, the past righteousness doesn’t count
They have altered their trust to the evil rather than to God
They will die, meaning spiritually / eternally

8. vs. 14: This is the first part of two verses dealing with one who has been wicked

God says *if* a person turns away from being wicked and does what is right...
This shows that the path of wickedness is not irreversible
It is possible to switch to the path of righteousness
This involves both attitude and actions
One action noted here is to “turn away from their sin”
The phrase about doing what is “just and right” occurs only 12 times in Scripture
8 of those times are in Ezekiel’s book
These two words are being used as meaning about the same thing
To do what is just and right is to walk the path of righteousness

9. vs. 15: Here are the actions to be carried out by the repentant person of vs. 14

They return what has been stolen, give back what was taken as a pledge
There were no banks in this time; all loans were done person to person
An item was given by the borrower to the lender to insure repayment
Some unscrupulous lenders might ask for a lot in order to give the loan
The lender holds power over the one needing the loan
If a change in path has been made, then this person will change how they act
They will give back what was taken, and “do no evil”

10. vs. 16a: Note the timing here

The person has repented and changed their actions
God says “None of the sins...will be remembered against them”
God is not going to bring up those past actions again—they are gone
God does not hold grudges

Application: Like Ezekiel, we too are called to be watchmen. We are not called by God as prophets, as he was. But we have opportunities to speak words of warning and wisdom to those around us. God punishes disobedience justly, but He is also gracious, merciful, and patient. He invites sinners to repent and turn from their wicked ways to find new life and righteousness in Jesus. This is the Good News we get to tell others about. And like Ezekiel, it is not up to us how people respond to our words of warning or wisdom. Whether the Good News is accepted or rejected is beyond our control. But our faithfulness in proclaiming the Good News certainly is within our control.

Prayer: Father God, please help us to walk the way of righteousness in our own lives. Give us strength each day to follow Jesus. Help us to see the opportunities you give us to tell of the salvation to be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.