



Life Group Study Notes

“Speak Now”

Ps. James Lowe - July 17, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Have you ever been in an auto accident? What happened? Could it have been avoided? How?
- Have you ever been a victim of a crime? What happened? Could it have been prevented? Explain.
- Have you ever been caught in a severe storm? Were you safe? What happened?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Ezekiel 33:1-11 ESV

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.

- This text speaks of the solemn responsibility belonging to a watchman appointed by men. They were to be alert and watch for any signs of impending danger or threat to the city or community, especially from foreign enemies.
- The greatest indictment against such a watchman is if he does indeed see the danger, but for whatever reason fails to warn the people. God will hold the watchman accountable for the loss of life of any person who might perish.

"So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

- This text teaches us that the example of a watchman is similar to the role of a spiritual prophet. The spiritual prophet's role is to warn God's people of the impending danger of God's holy judgment that will come if they remain unrepentant in their sins. But if he perceives the coming judgment of God and fails to warn the people for whatever reason, God will hold him accountable for any who perish even though they deserve the judgment that comes on them.

"And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: 'Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?' Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

- God does not desire that anyone perishes under his holy judgment for unrepentant sin. His longing is that people will turn from their sin and seek him, receiving his forgiveness and reconciliation. Yet God cannot and will not change in his holiness. He is holy and righteous in all his ways. Nevertheless, he is also merciful and gracious.
- Because God is merciful and gracious he came into this world, taking to himself human nature in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He lived a fully human life without sin. He then went to the cross and voluntarily subjected himself to the punishment we deserve for our sins. Under his own punishment for our sin, he died and was buried, providing for the forgiveness of all of our sins. Three days later he rose from the dead, proving his divinity and providing for our redemption.
- God desires that all people, all of whom are sinful and are sinners, would turn from their evil ways and turn to Christ. In Christ all can be forgiven and restored into a relationship with God. In Christ all can be cleansed of their guilt and given hope not only for this life, but also more importantly for the life to come. Jesus guarantees our immortality beyond death and our future participation in his eternal kingdom.
- For these reasons, each of us must embrace our own responsibility to be like the watchman and the spiritual prophet. We too must warn people of God's impending judgment for sin, encouraging and exhorting them that God desires to be merciful and gracious to them.

Isaiah 58:1-2 ESV

"Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God."

- Scripture tells us that all of God's New Covenant believers are a prophetic people, because God has given each of us his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be his voice and gives us what to say and how to say it, so that others might hear God's words of both warning and hope.
- Therefore, we too must lift up our voice and not hold back. We must speak to others about God and his ways. Every person is in need of God whether they realize it or not.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- Have you ever seriously studied or thought about God's judgment for sin as it is taught in the Bible? What did you learn?
- What do you believe about your responsibility to be a prophetic voice of warning and reconciliation to other people? How seriously do you take it? How is it evidenced in your life?
- How could you be more effective as God's watchman in the lives of others? What are some mistakes you should avoid?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God for a greater revelation of his holiness and his coming judgment on sin.
- Ask God for a greater revelation of the spiritual blindness and ignorance of people around you, and for greater compassion for them so that you would be moved to serve them with God's truth.
- Ask God for greater knowledge, insight, understanding, and wisdom to be more effective as God's ambassador to the people he has placed in your life.