

EZEKIEL: BLOSSOMING DURING LIFE'S MOST SEVERE CRISES
Part XVI: God's Work To Sustain His Messenger Through Tough Ministry Times
(Ezekiel 29:1-33:33)

I. Introduction

- A. Dr. James Dobson forewords a book (Pastor's At Risk) which states that 70% of pastors interviewed by writers of the book questioned if they should even **remain** in the ministry! This exposes a deep need!
- B. God has a lesson on this critical issue in Ezekiel--one for teachers **and** their disciples to heed!

II. God's Work To Sustain His Prophet's Ministry Through Tragic Times, Ezekiel 29:1-33:33.

- A. Ezekiel ministered in tough and tragic times, Ezekiel 4:1-28:26:
 - 1. He ministered among captives in Babylon who had been taken captive for their nation's sin, 4:1-24:14.
 - 2. During this ministry, Ezekiel's wife died as part of a ministry assignment for Ezekiel, 24:15-27.
 - 3. Following this event, and Jerusalem's fall, Ezekiel was called of God to predict the fall of Jerusalem's Gentile enemies, the falls of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre and Sidon, Ez. 25:1-28:26.
- B. Capping off this string of hard predictions, Ezekiel was commanded to predict the fall of Egypt, 29:1-32.
 - 1. Egypt is pictured as a vicious crocodile that God pulls out of the Nile where it is killed by wild land animals, symbols of foreign nations, 29:1-6a.
 - 2. The cause for her fall is Egypt's failure to be true to its protection treaty with Israel, Ez. 29:6b-9.
 - 3. Accordingly, Egypt would be destroyed, never to become a dominant nation again, 29:10-16.
 - 4. Following this prediction, Ezekiel describes her defeat, 29:17-30:26.
 - 5. God pictures Egypt as being similar to Assyria that had already fallen, Ez. 31:1-16.
 - 6. In dramatic imagery, Egypt arrives in the place of the departed dead, where, unlike Egyptian theology on the bliss of the upright, her **enemies** are all there, Ez. 31:17-32! This is Egypt's final humiliation!!
- C. **However, after this hard ministry for Ezekiel, God strengthened His prophet, Ezekiel, Ez. 33:1-33.**
 - 1. Following this hard string of judgment sermons, as before (Ez. 3:17, 18-21), God now recommissioned Ezekiel as a watchman over Israel, Ez. 33:1-7. His job was to relay God's truth once again or he would face **capital punishment from the Lord** as in the **first** commissioning, 33:7-9.
 - 2. The message this time was easier, being a message of restoration, Ez. 33:10-20:
 - a. The people were convinced that they would pine away in captivity due to God's judgment, v. 10.
 - b. Ezekiel conveyed to these discouraged ones that (a) God desires that men live, and (b) sin is forgivable by an infinitely gracious God, Ez. 33:10-20.
 - 3. Then word came that Jerusalem had indeed fallen, something that Ezekiel had been predicting for 7 years, Ez. 33:21. Hence, Ezekiel's mouth was opened to speak again according to the 3:26 prediction!
- D. **But just when all seemed rosy, Ezekiel was thrust back into tough times and told to plug along!**
 - 1. After all these things, the captives developed an errant belief: they thought that they as a people had a sure right to the land of Canaan since they outnumbered Abraham, a single individual, who was given the land, Ez. 33:23-24. So instead of appreciating Ezekiel's recently validated ministry due to the news of Jerusalem's fall, they complained. Yet, Ezekiel continued to minister to them, relaying news of Israel's sin behind the nation's loss of God's blessing, 33:25-29.
 - 2. In fact, God informed Ezekiel that the people were still looking down on him, seeing Ezekiel's ministry as a form of their entertainment, 30-32!
 - 3. Yet, in the future, God promised to validate Ezekiel's ministry before these people when his latest predictions came to pass, 33:33! The divine implication was for Ezekiel to "keep on keeping on"!!

Lesson: (1) *The vigor to continue ministering during service hardships is God's sole undertaking. The teacher must lean on the Lord or he will fail!!* (2) *If we have a tough time in ministry, continue to fear the Lord more than the people as motivation to continue obeying Him, Ez. 33:8b!* (3) *Expect God to vindicate you in the future if your current efforts are under siege, 33:33!* (4) *If we are disciples of a teacher who is under fire, remember that his being under fire does not prove that he lacks God's approval, for he could be suffering for righteousness. Time will vindicate or condemn his ministry, so don't judge him too soon (1 Tim. 5:19-25)! We should rather pray for him, Ep. 6:18-19.*