

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious Part XXXIII: Illustrating Israel's Great Pain From God's Discipline (Ezekiel 24:15-27)

I. Introduction

- A. When God disciplines man for sin, His discipline is very painful that it might produce the desired repentance.
- B. Ezekiel 24:15-27 provides an illustration of this truth, and we view this passage for our insight (as follows):

II. Illustrating Israel's Great Pain From God's Discipline, Ezekiel 24:15-27.

- A. God made Ezekiel a moving illustration of the painful shock his fellow Hebrew captives would experience at the fall of Jerusalem in God's judgment, the destruction of their beloved temple and children, Ezek. 24:15-24:
 - 1. After God's prophet in Ezekiel 24:1-14 announced that the Babylonian army had begun its siege of Jerusalem, the Lord told Ezekiel that He was going to take the delight of his eyes, Ezekiel's wife, away from him in death with a "blow," that is, to take her life very suddenly, Ezekiel 24:15-16a NIV.
 - 2. Regardless of the intense shock of such event, Ezekiel was not to mourn or weep, not to let tears run from his eyes, but to sigh silently, to perform no public mourning act for the dead, Ezek. 24:16b-17a. Rather, he was to bind on his turban, put on his sandals, not cover the lower part of his face nor eat any food, highly unusual behavior for a man who had just tragically, suddenly lost his beloved wife, Ezekiel 24:17b NIV.
 - 3. Accordingly, Ezekiel informed the people of Israel in captivity in the morning about this prediction from the Lord, and that very evening, his wife died, Ezekiel 24:18a. In obedience to the Lord, Ezekiel behaved in the unusual manner God had directed him the next morning when his wife was being buried, a time when all other Hebrews would openly express their deep grief at such a great personal loss, Ezek. 24:18b.
 - 4. Ezekiel's remarkably unusual behavior in the face of his great personal tragedy obviously produced the question from onlooking fellow Hebrews as to what his behavior signified, Ezekiel 24:19.
 - 5. God's prophet replied that the word of the Lord had come to him, telling him to explain to the Hebrew captives in Babylon that God was about to destroy what they held dear similar to how the Lord had taken Ezekiel's beloved wife in death: God would profane His temple in Jerusalem, the pride of their power, the delight of their eyes and the yearning of their soul, letting the Babylonian soldiers destroy it, and He would cause their sons and daughters in Jerusalem to fall by the sword of the Babylonians, Ezek. 24:20-21.
 - 6. This great destruction would be so shocking that Ezekiel's fellow Hebrew captives would do what he did -- they would not cover the lower part of their faces nor eat food, their turbans would remain on their heads and their sandals on their feet, they would not mourn or weep, but rot away in their iniquities and groan to each other with the realization that God had severely punished their nation for its sin, Ezek. 24:22-23 NIV.
 - 7. In this way, Ezekiel's experience in the tragic, sudden loss of his wife would be a sign to his fellow Hebrews in captivity that just as he had done, they would do due to the great shock they would experience. When this shock occurred, Ezekiel's hearers would realize that God was the Lord, Ezekiel 24:24.
- B. God had also made Ezekiel another very painful illustration of God's great judgment on Israel, Ezek. 24:25-27:
 - 1. On the day God would remove the stronghold of Ezekiel's fellow Hebrew captives, the temple of their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their soul's desire along with their sons and daughters, in 587 B. C. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 2026), a fugitive would come and report the news to him, Ez. 24:25-26.
 - 2. When that happened, God would release His restraints on Ezekiel so he could speak freely with his fellow Hebrew captives, Ezekiel 24:27a. For five years since Ezekiel 3:25-27 in 592 B. C. (Ibid., p. 1138, "Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel"), God had restricted Ezekiel from speaking except when he gave God's messages to the people. This sudden release from his speaking restraint after five long years would be a sign to Ezekiel's fellow Hebrews that God had been behind his ministry all along, and they would then realize that the Lord who had been leading Ezekiel to give his messages was truly God, Ezekiel 24:27b.

Lesson: *In great pain, Ezekiel's sudden loss of his dear wife and his restraint in grieving for her illustrated the great pain sinful Israel would experience under God's discipline for sin. Ezekiel's release from God's five-year restraint in speaking freely with others would prove God had been behind his ministry, and that the Lord was God.*

Application: *(1) If God's discipline for sin is very painful, may we confess that sin and forsake it. (2) If while we serve the Lord He arranges for us to be restricted in our functions in any way as in Ezekiel's case, may we realize that it fits God's plan to make us more effective for Him, that we keep serving Him regardless of the restriction.*