

**Step Up When God Calls  
Ezekiel 3:10-11**

**January 20, 2019**

10 He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears; 11 then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD"; whether they hear or refuse to hear.

Prophets of the Hebrew text are known by their unique circumstances and personality characteristics. As for Ezekiel, he is known for his visions. His call and commission from God came to him in the form of a vision of whirlwind and fire. Cherubim appeared with the faces of a lion, ox, man, and eagle. Through his visions Ezekiel could foresee the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. He warned the people of God's judgment, for their sin and rebellion, and he preached repentance. In his unusual vision of a valley of dry bones he could also foresee the future restoration of Israel. So, he promised the people that they would return to Jerusalem and that their homeland would be restored.

The Scripture takes place within the realm of Ezekiel's commissioning by God. Ezekiel is commanded to ingest the scroll. This is a similar concept to other Old Testament prophets. Isaiah had seraphs cauterize his mouth with burning coal. As for Jeremiah, God touched his mouth and placed the word in it. Ezekiel is given the scroll and commanded to eat it. They all point to one key principle - the internalization of the divine word - to consume the word and to have the word within you.

In today's Scripture, God is telling Ezekiel that he is to receive all of God's words into his heart. This first step is not just to hear word or to read the word, but to take the word into his heart. Then, after he has taken the word into his heart he is to go to the people and deliver the word to them, even if they refuse to hear. There lies the contemporary lesson for us. To receive the word of God in your heart. That means do not just listen to the word or just read the word but take the word into your heart means to consume it, own it, be filled with the word, make it an essential part of who you are. Then give your testimony to the people. Step up! Tell the people the word of God even if they refuse to hear. That is our Bible lesson.

When we moved to Lynchburg I became lapsed. Hardnosed preaching that prioritized the shame of sin over the grace and love of God turned me off. For my age I had good Bible knowledge. What I wanted and needed was to worship in spirit and truth with sermons that were based on the Bible. Then one day in adulthood I stumbled upon a doctrine that was truthful with teaching and theology that was focused on the Bible. The theology emphasized an interpretation of text as opposed to dogmatic preaching. So, I visited the church (Disciples of Christ) and was excited to find doctrine that was based on the Bible as opposed to doctrine that was skewed towards popular segmented interpretation (interpretation that is favored by a certain segment of society). I found a church home and soon learned that they needed a Sunday school teacher. I was afraid to be one because I knew that my Bible knowledge was not good enough to be a teacher. You see, what I did is I focused on my inadequacies. Last week I talked about how often at times we say no because we focus on our own inadequacies. Well, today is my testimony. I had a choice to make, to focus on my inadequacies or to focus on what God needs. This is very...very...very important! To focus on our inadequacies or to focus on what God needs. God needed a Sunday school teacher. In reality it is because others did not step up. I was scared but throughout the process the Holy Spirit guided me and strengthened me. What I needed was as much faith in me as God had in me. What I wanted was in contrast to what God needed.

There is interesting parallelism between the lessons from Ezekiel and life today. God needs the people to receive the word in their hearts, not just to hear the word or read the word but to take the word into the heart. God needs people to deliver the word to the people, to tell the people the word of God, not the word of popular mainstream society, not the popular word that the people want to hear, but the true word of God. God needs the true word of God delivered to the people even if they refuse to hear.

I think the contemporary lesson for us is to recognize the seriousness of the situation. In the time of Ezekiel (the exile) the problem was unfaithfulness to God. In our society today we are faced with the same problem. During the time frame of the exile people abandoned God for idols. They deserted the Lord and defiled the temple with idols. Today we face a crisis for virtually the same reasons. People have abandoned God for idols; they have lapsed, fail to worship, and put a higher value on the creation than the creator. What God needs is people to step up and receive the word in your heart and to take the word to the people even if they refuse to hear. God gives you love and forgiveness. Such a wonderful gift deserves an appropriate response.