

Ezekiel Part Five

“Ezekiel’s Preparation – Part Two”



Need For Continued Preparation

In our last article we saw through scriptures in Ezekiel chapters two and three how God took very seriously the preparations necessary to make Ezekiel a vessel fit for the Master’s use. Chapter two defined how Ezekiel’s relationship with the Word of God was to be as one consuming the flesh and blood of the Crucified. He was to “fill his bowels” with that which defined the bitter application of crucifixion (lamentations, mourning and woe: 2:10, 3:3). As a result, chapter three described Ezekiel being lifted beyond the realm of information into the courts of the Living God, face to face with the Glory in His place (3:12). Even after receiving such divine and living preparations by the hand of God, Ezekiel was not yet ready. God desired His “man on the scene” to be more than a scripture-quoter or one who had seen visions of God. The Lord wanted to send one who had conformed to the Life-Blood of all he had read and seen, and was therefore able to bear with the people and their circumstances through God’s love. God wants His Son formed in us to such a degree that we are motivated by the Spirit of Christ above all things, including even certain “spiritual things” that can press us into motion before it is truly Christ in us. Ezekiel is a picture to us of the work God our Father wants to do in our lives to prepare us as vessels of His Son in ways that will emanate Christ, not just as a message, but as our Life.

The Spirit of Christ Crucified

Ezekiel 3:24-26 “Then the Spirit came into me and set me on my feet. He spoke to me and said, Go to your house and shut yourself in. There, son of man, you will be tied with ropes so you cannot go out among the people. And I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be speechless and unable to rebuke them, for they are rebels. But when I give you a message, I will loosen your tongue and let you speak”.

In chapter 3 verse 17 God tells Ezekiel, “I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel”. Certainly at this point Ezekiel felt ready to take his position on the watchtower and start preaching his message to the people. But rather than sending Ezekiel forth with a bull-horn and prophesies, the Spirit spoke to him and told him to “go to his house and shut himself in”. Not only was Ezekiel to shut himself in his house, but he was also to be tied with ropes so that he could not leave and start rebuking the people. In fact, God was so adamant on this point that He made Ezekiel temporarily unable to speak. There is a zeal we can experience once we have tasted the Living Word and touched God in His glory that can press us into action in a manner that is not yet according to the way of the Cross. This urgent need to rush out and begin speaking may be coming from a real encounter with the Living God. Anyone who has truly met Jesus knows this impulse, and how overwhelming it can be at times! Yet God is not interested in our zeal, He is totally set on forming Christ in us so that CHRIST and not zeal will motivate our ministry. In God’s time He will open our mouths and loosen our feet to minister through the Life of His Son. In the gospel of John, Jesus said, “the words that I speak and the works that I do are my Father’s”. Jesus ministered only through the Father in Him, and so we are to minister only through the Son in us. Psalm 118:27 declares that the sacrifice needs to be bound to the altar with cords. The cross must be allowed to do its work in us before we hop off of the altar and into action. Ezekiel was bound with ropes and confined to his house to ensure that he would remain in a position of limitation until the work of the Cross had been applied more fully within him. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, “I am CRUCIFIED with Christ, therefore it is not I (doing the ministry) but Christ who is living in me”. We can fill up on the Word and see the Lord in glorious ways, but it is not until we have yielded our members to the reality that we are CRUCIFIED with Christ that we are ready to be sent (Roms. 6:8 , Gal. 1:24). Ezekiel was going to be the main person ministering to God’s people during their captivity in Babylon. His ministry was going to be prolific. If Ezekiel had gone forth in his own zeal, then his ministry would have been fruitless. In John 12:24 Jesus said that fruit only comes through death and not other methods. God loved Ezekiel and those he would minister to enough to not cut short his preparation but allow the full work of consecration to come. The altar/cross must be embraced so that it is Christ and not “us” going forth. In the beginning other people had to bind Ezekiel with ropes to the altar (Ezek. 3:25), but eventually the Lord Himself was the One Who bound Ezekiel as He lay in limitation and shame, bearing the sins of the people and preaching the Cross to them (Ezek. 4:8). Eventually we will become constrained by the love of Christ within us, and that will hold us in relationships and circumstances from which our flesh would otherwise escape. In John 21:8 we find Peter no longer moving in his own zeal but carried by Another.

***“When the apostle Paul preached the Cross, he determined to carry himself
in the spirit of the Crucified, and spoke only from that position”.***

Relating in the Love of Jesus

At this point some of us may be thinking, “I am not a minister and this article does not pertain to me”. I believe that the principles set forth in these scriptures pertain to all of us, every day of our lives. How many times have I begun speaking to someone when I did not yet have the heart of Jesus at work in me towards them? I may have been “scriptural” and even based my words on things I had seen from the Lord, but my heart-condition was wrong. Instead of ministering the grace of Christ into that relationship or situation, I ended up doing even more damage. I have done that in my own life, and afterwards wished I had never left my house and spoken. I need to bind myself to the Cross of Christ until my flesh will not get up and hurt others with my bad attitudes, personal hurts and offences, or self-righteous spirituality that has not yet been tempered by the love of Jesus. It is God’s wisdom that these scriptures in Ezekiel instruct us all to not move until it is God’s time to move based on the Spirit of His Son at work in us.

Ezekiel’s First Mission

Ezekiel 4:1-8 “And now, son of man, take a large clay brick and set it down in front of you. Then draw a map of the city of Jerusalem on it. Show the city under siege. Build a wall around it so no one can escape. Set up the enemy camp, and surround the city with siege ramps and battering rams. Then take an iron griddle and place it between you and the city. Turn toward the city and demonstrate how harsh the siege will be against Jerusalem. This will be a warning to the people of Israel. “Now lie on your left side and place the sins of Israel on yourself. You are to bear their sins for the number of days you lie there on your side. I am requiring you to bear Israel’s sins for 390 days—one day for each year of their sin. After that, turn over and lie on your right side for 40 days—one day for each year of Judah’s sin. “Meanwhile, keep staring at the siege of Jerusalem. Lie there with your arm bared and prophesy her destruction. I will tie you up with ropes so you won’t be able to turn from side to side until the days of your siege have been completed.”

In Ezekiel 4:1-8 we find God sending Ezekiel out on his first mission. He is allowed to leave his house to minister, temporarily free from the ropes and restraints. What a great hour this must have been considering all that Ezekiel had gone through up to this point. But rather than assigning Ezekiel a noble task that would make him look and feel spiritual among the people, God sends him forth into what would appear foolish, weak, unspiritual and offensive. Ezekiel is instructed to build a miniature version of Jerusalem under Babylonian siege, and lay facing his miniature Jerusalem for 430 days. Ezekiel would lie for 390 days on his left side bearing the ten tribes of Israel’s sins, and another 40 days on his right side bearing the sins of Judah. While he is laying there he is to prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem. Positioned there in shame and foolishness, once again bound with ropes, he is told to bear the sins of the people while keeping his heart and eyes on Jerusalem. It is while he is in this lowly position that strongly resembles Christ on his Cross that Ezekiel is finally allowed to speak. God is giving us a very strong picture here concerning the way we are to communicate and minister to one another. Not in arrogance or spiritual superiority, but from the heart of the Crucified. Our words are to come from a place of bearing one another in love, even when it requires us to take a very lowly position. Ezekiel’s was prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem. In a very real sense, Ezekiel was declaring the people’s need to allow the Cross to be applied in their lives. Even though his message was deep-reaching and personal in a way that could sound very harsh; his spirit was love and his motivation was God’s desire. Likewise, when the apostle

Paul preached the Cross, he determined to carry himself in the spirit of the Crucified, and speak only from that position; *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (I Cor. 2:1-4).* Paul never compromised the preaching of the Cross, even when he was stoned for it. But Paul had Christ revealed in Him (Gal. 1:16) so that his preaching was filled with the Spirit of Christ and was able to minister beyond the words in the power of the Spirit. The goal is not to modify our behavior or change our approach. The answer is for Christ to be formed in us to such a degree that our nature is changed. Our words and actions will then be motivated by His love as we bear in our bodies the marks of His dying for others. Ezekiel is simply a picture in type and shadow that declares how Christ wants to live in us today.

Not I... But Christ

Ezekiel was one whose heart was with the Lord, and yet he alone was tied up in ropes. Ezekiel had seen the glory of God and received His living Word, yet he was the one whose tongue was mute from speaking while the false prophets around him preached freedom from Babylon. Almost everyone around him was living in rebellion against God in some way or another, yet it was Ezekiel’s attitudes God was dealing with in these first chapters of the book. There is no justification before God our Father for communicating the things of His heart with an attitude that is not Christ. We are not to be occupied in heart and mind with the sins of others and the injustices around us, we are to be filled with Christ. A famous quote states, “Preach the Gospel, and use words if necessary”. The most powerful, life-changing sermon ever preached was done on Mount Calvary from one who was nailed to a Tree. He didn’t say much, but every word rings throughout eternity in power. On Calvary, Christ’s words came from something that was going on His heart; a dying for others out of love. We are the branches of that Tree upon which Christ died. We are the Body of the Lamb Who gives His Life for others. By our union into Christ may we receive, through grace, His heart and love for others as we allow Him to flow through us when we relate, minister, speak, and live with all those God has put in our lives.



“Because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the gospel”
(Phil. 1:7).