

# BEING A WATCHMAN

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Ezekiel 33:1-5 says, “Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, *if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.*” Here, God compared Ezekiel’s job and responsibility to a watchman. From studying this passage and other scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, we can learn much about the responsibility that God gives to each of us to shine as lights and proclaim his truth to this wicked world.

## **The duties of a watchman**

A watchman who warns a land of a coming sword will not be held responsible for the blood of those who do not heed his warning (Ezek 33:1-5). But a watchman who does not give a warning will have the blood required at his hand. Ezekiel 33:6 says, “*But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.*” The watchman’s responsibility is to give the warning. He is not responsible for how the people respond to the warning. In the same way, God had set Ezekiel as “a watchman unto the house of Israel” (Ezek 33:7). The Lord said to the prophet, “*Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul*” (Ezek 33:7-9).

## **Every Christian’s duty**

In 2 Timothy 2:24-26, we can see that God expects every one of His servants to warn the lost so that He may have the opportunity to give them repentance: “*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*” Therefore, all Christian must be “able to teach” and warn those who are in sin. That is why 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify

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the Lord God in your hearts: and *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*” Warning those in sin of the eternal danger they face is not hateful, but is the loving thing to do. Notice how God defines love and hate in Leviticus 19:17-18: “*Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.*” To allow someone to remain in sin is hateful, while rebuking them is an important part of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus called this the second greatest commandment (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31). Christ included this commandment in the New Testament (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). And in the parable of the good Samaritan, the Lord taught that *everyone* is our neighbor (Luke 10:25-37).

## **Only God’s word and all of God’s word**

Preachers are responsible for preaching God’s word, *only* God’s word (1 Cor 2:4-5,13; 1 Tim 6:3-5; 1 Pet 4:11), and *all* of God’s word (Matt 28:20; Acts 20:20,27). Preachers are responsible for preaching this word to every man (Matt 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16; Col 1:25-28), both in season and out of season (Ezek 2:5,7; 2 Tim 4:2). Those who are silent when they should be preaching will held accountable by God for the souls that are lost. Each person bears the ultimate responsibility for their own soul. God has made His existence known to every person via the creation (Psa 19:1; 75:1; 100:2-3; 104:24; Rom 1:18-21). And God promises that everyone who seeks their Creator will find (Matt 7:7-8; Acts 17:27). Therefore, there is no excuse for not seeking God and ending up lost eternally (Rom 1:20). However, God’s children who don’t warn the lost will have blood on their hands, spiritually speaking. God would have required the blood of the unrepentant Israelites at Ezekiel’s hand if he had not warned them with God’s word (Ezek 3:16-21; 33:1-9). But it was *not* Ezekiel’s responsibility to do the believing for others. Ezekiel’s responsibility was to warn the people. It was the people’s responsibility to listen. The New Testament teaches the same thing. The unbelieving Jews’ blood was on their own heads, not Paul’s, because Paul did not neglect to preach to them and warn them (Acts 18:5-6). Indeed, Paul was “pure from the blood of all men” because he had not shunned to declare unto them “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:17-27). When Paul preached the gospel, it was not his fault when the hearers did not believe or obey the word that he preached. May we always be faithful watchmen like the prophet Ezekiel and the Apostle Paul!