

Words of Life

(January 16, 2008)

Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man's bread of sorrow. So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.

Ezekiel 24:16-18

I don't know of a passage in Scripture that is more moving to me than this one. Anyone who thinks the life of a prophet of God was without it's hardships needs to read these verses and think about them. I must admit, I don't understand them fully myself. Ezekiel was one of the great prophets of the Bible. One of the men sent to be the very mouthpiece of God to a rebellious people during a time that their rebellion would lead them to be overthrown by the Babylonians. And in my human way of thinking, I read the verses above and think "that's not fair!" Ezekiel was asked to go beyond what any man should be asked. He was asked to not even publicly mourn the loss of his wife. How is that even possible?"

Well, the first answer is that it is not possible apart from the grace of God. God gives the grace where and when it is required. It is the same as when we read today of a Christian mother forgiving the murderer of her son because of her faith in Christ. There is no way that can happen apart from a supernatural work of the Spirit in a life. It was the same with Ezekiel.

But there is another aspect of this requirement of God upon Ezekiel that we must not miss. And we don't get to it until verse 24 where we read "Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord GOD." That's it! That's the answer. Ezekiel's life was to be a sign to others. God was telling the Jews that were in exile that Jerusalem and the temple (the delight of their eyes) was going to be destroyed. When it was, as incredible as it sounds, they would neither weep nor mourn. It was an astonishment, just as the people looked at Ezekiel in astonishment that he did not outwardly mourn the loss of his own wife, the delight of his eyes.

By this time in his life, Ezekiel had learned a very important lesson. Nowhere are we told that he questioned God why he had to endure such a difficult circumstance. He simply obeyed. The succinctness of it all is vividly expressed in verse 18 where we are told "So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died, and the next morning I did as I was commanded."

Every ounce of Ezekiel's energy went into obedience. Not into asking questions. O how I want to learn from this passage. How often it is that I am asking question upon question when I am in a difficult place. God why? God, how long? God, do you care? Do you see? Will this last forever? Is this what it's all about? Why me? The questions can go on and on.

For me the lesson is this..... Instead of asking questions, obey God. Just obey. When my work is overwhelming, when my emotions are exposed and raw, when my family is in crises, when my finances are gone, when my health is deteriorating, when my car gets crunched, just obey. In doing so, my life will be an example to others.

We often think our life should be an example in a different way. Most often, we

The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

think our life should exemplify Christ by what we say. For instance, when I am at work at Trader Joe's (the grocery store I work in), I generally think I have been the best witness when I "say" something to someone about God. Or when I pray for someone. Or in some way verbalize my love for God or tell of His greatness and love and power and strength. But many times, God determines our life to be an example in another way. By placing us in situations that are so far over our head that we will not survive without calling out to him in desperation. Then, others will look at us and see something different. They will see our actions and how we respond in the midst of the fierce battles of life and see that we are not only people that love God with our mouths, but we are people that rely on God with our lives when everything crumbles around us. They will see that we are not immune to difficult and horrible situations and afflictions. But they will see that in the midst of them there is grace upon our lives to still remain obedient in spite of the difficulties.

Yes, it is a difficult life we are called to. No it won't be easy or glamorous, but it will be worth it!

But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

1 Corinthians 2:9

God bless you as you serve God through the difficulties. He is faithful!

Pastor Ted.