

Ezekiel: Call and Commission

Stand up, son of man: a prophet's call, a scroll to eat, and a watchman's commission

SPEAKER Geno Hildebrandt

DATE Sunday, March 14, 2021

PASSAGES Ezekiel 2:1-3:27; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 3:26; Revelation 19:10

MESSAGE Begins at 1:03:17 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Every person who names the name of Jesus is called and commissioned to serve his purposes in the earth. Ezekiel's call shows what that looks like: God raises a mere human to his feet, fills him with the Spirit, feeds him a hard word that tastes sweet in obedience, sends him to stubborn people – and brings him back to his knees in humility, submission and worship.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The Great Commission is for every follower of Christ: disciple-making is the mission of the church, and Jesus promises to be with us to the end of the age.
- ◆ God does not want robots. He raises us to our feet as human beings and calls us to partner with him, with our gifts, creativity and personalities intact.
- ◆ Ezekiel could do nothing apart from the Spirit. A call from God is an invitation into an ongoing relationship, not a single ecstatic experience.
- ◆ When God sends a hard word through a prophet – or through a friend – it is mercy. If he did not care, he would not send it.
- ◆ The scroll of lament tasted sweet: obedience to a difficult call carries its own sweetness, even when we do not feel joyful.

- ◆ God gave Ezekiel a week of anger and confusion before commissioning him as a watchman. He is patient with our reluctance.
- ◆ We are to be people of the book and people of the Spirit, and our witness to the risen Jesus is itself prophetic: “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

► 1:03:17

The live stream had struggled that morning – Geno asked people not to blame the tech team for problems beyond their control – and then picked up the book of Ezekiel again, this time with the prophet’s call.

Called and commissioned

► 1:04:04

His opening statement was simple: every person who names the name of Jesus is called and commissioned to pursue his purposes in the earth. Where does that come from? The Great Commission, where Jesus, with all authority given to him, tells his followers to go and make disciples of all nations ([Matthew 28:18–20](#)). “Disciple-making is the mission of the church,” he had the room repeat – and then again, because the first attempt “was pretty weak.”

► 1:05:26

The promise at the end matters as much: “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” If you want to know where Jesus is in the earth, he is in the mission, and he invites us to join him there. Every church worth its salt, and every believer who takes faith seriously, wrestles with how to carry it out. Ezekiel’s call, Geno argued, has things to teach us, because the God who called him has not changed.

► 1:06:45

He recalled the vision of [Ezekiel 1](#): four living creatures with four faces, wings and enormous wheels, an expanse like crystal, and on the throne a radiant figure surrounded by the colors of the rainbow. It says that God is enormous, awesome and glorious, and that he is Lord of all creation. And Ezekiel falls on his face.

“Stand on your feet”

► 1:08:06

“And he said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.’ And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.”

EZEKIEL 2:1-2 ↗

► 1:09:04

“Son of man” simply means human being. In the presence of God, the Spirit sets Ezekiel upright at full height, not abased. That matters, Geno said, because God is not interested in robots or unthinking automatons. He made Adam and set him to tend the garden, and walked with him in the cool of the evening. The idea that God is out to crush people into feeling worthless “is not right.”

► 1:10:35

He wants men and women to come wholehearted, “with our gifts and our talents and our creativity and our personalities intact,” and he uses them. We do not come to Jesus because we are clean; we come because we are not. The common picture of Christians as people who think they are better than everyone else is “completely false”: he calls us with our pride, greed and fear and says, son of man, daughter of Eve, stand up and follow me. “If you don’t hear anything else I say, that alone is amazing.”

► 1:12:53

And the Spirit entered him. Ezekiel is a full-fledged human being, but he could neither receive God’s words nor carry them apart from the Spirit. Put in Geno’s central Texas way: Ezekiel could go nowhere, and neither can we, apart from a relationship. The Spirit entering and speaking to him is an ongoing relationship, not just an ecstatic moment.

Sent to a rebellious house

► 1:14:34

“Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

EZEKIEL 2:3-5 ↗

Impudent means showing no respect – “you’re not the boss of me.” This was a defeated people in a foreign land who still carried that attitude. If you find yourself at a distance from God, Geno suggested, it may be worth looking at your heart for something like it.

► 1:16:55

Sending a prophet to tell a rebellious people how far they were from God, and what judgment was coming, “is the merciful grace of God. If God didn’t care about his people, he wouldn’t send a prophet.” So when a hard word comes to us through Scripture, through the Spirit or through people who love Jesus, pause and recognise that “you have just been mercied by the God of heaven.”

Eat this scroll

► 1:17:43

“But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe... Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

EZEKIEL 2:8–3:3 ↗

► 1:18:42

This, Geno said, is the peak of the three chapters, and it was meant to be unexpected. First, Ezekiel must not rebel; to be an Israelite who belongs to God is to be a non-rebellious follower. Second, a scroll written front and back is full – a lament, a funeral song in a minor key. His ministry is going to be tough.

► 1:21:03

And yet it is sweet. Geno knew the feeling: having to face someone or say a hard thing, sometimes taking weeks to work up the courage, dreading it, doing it, and walking away. “I may not feel joyful,” but there is a sweetness when we know we have obeyed God, however difficult the obedience.

Seven days of bitterness

► 1:21:44

“The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the Lord being strong upon me. And I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.”

EZEKIEL 3:12-15 ↗

► 1:24:27

“Unless you think this is really sweet, all lightness and butterflies and rainbows and flowers and pretty birds – that’s not it at all.” Ezekiel sits among the exiles angry and confused, wondering whether he can go on. Has God ever asked you to cross the street, shake the hand of someone who hurt you, or speak to family about Christ knowing they would think you crazy? Geno admitted he once walked away from something God called him to do for several years. “So I identify here: hey dude, I get it.”

► 1:26:13

A week later the word came again, and Ezekiel was ready – as though the Spirit said, come with me now. If you are in a place where you have told God “not yet,” Geno said, today is a good day to listen: “Come, let’s do this thing together. I will empower you. I will be with you.”

A watchman

► 1:27:08

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.”

EZEKIEL 3:16-21 ↗

► 1:28:38

Called a week earlier to be a prophet, Ezekiel is now commissioned as a watchman, responsible to warn the wicked and the righteous alike. We too have been given, to a real degree, responsibility for others’ lives – by speaking or not speaking to them the words of life and the testimony of Jesus we have experienced. “Who else in our society knows Jesus, understands the gospel? Who else is going to tell that story? It’s ours, and we should feel the weight of that.”

► 1:30:13

Sent out to the valley, Ezekiel sees the glory of the Lord again and falls on his face – overwhelmed, one commentator says, not just by the vision but by the One seated on the throne (Ezekiel 3:22-27). Then

the hardest instruction: he will be shut in his house, bound, his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth, speaking only the words God gives him – until Jerusalem falls. His silent life becomes a living picture of the exiles, cut off and unable to hear from God apart from his work among them.

► 1:33:08

“If you don’t hear anything else: humility, submission and worship. That’s a good place to be in the presence of God.”

Lessons for us

► 1:33:51

We are **“son of man.”** God never calls Ezekiel by name – about ninety times in forty-eight chapters it is “son of man,” a reminder that he is part of the creation and God is its Lord. That is us. What a privilege for creatures to worship the almighty God – creatures he gave freedom to rebel.

► 1:34:34

And how did God respond to our puny rebellion, like an ant on an anthill? “He became an ant, lived among us,” took on flesh, and was punished in our place, so that he could be, as Paul says, both just and the justifier. So when we speak to others we begin with our own brokenness: “I’m not above you. This is what Jesus did for me.”

► 1:36:13

Eat the scroll. We must become people of the book – not memorising every word, but internalising the gospel: understanding how it has saved us and what a privilege it is to be sons and daughters of God.

► 1:37:40

Be sustained by the Spirit. People of the book and people of the Spirit go together; engage both “and then there will be power.” At his Saturday dinner church on Zoom, reading about Celtic Christians who tried to pray without ceasing, the group concluded it means a relationship where our first reaction in every conversation is “Lord, help me” or “thank you, Jesus.” We cannot walk that way unless we are led and filled by the Spirit – “I’m charismatic in that sense.”

► 1:40:14

Expect hard people. Ezekiel was not happy to be sent to impudent people who would reject him. God does not send us to the slaughter, and we will not win every conversation or every person, but he gives us ability. Walk with confidence that God is with you, will give you words, and is sending workers into the harvest.

► 1:41:50

Our witness is prophetic. Anyone who names Jesus believes in the resurrection – a miracle, “and that alone in our modern society is crazy.” Naming him bears witness to what God has accomplished, which people do not want to hear; it is a judgment on darkness and a witness to the glory still to come, “because when we name the name of Jesus Christ we say he is Lord and he will win.”

► 1:43:24

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

REVELATION 19:10 ↗

► 1:44:17

Like Ezekiel, we should find ourselves bowed before almighty God in humility and worship. But “don’t ask for” living creatures and a chariot throne before you will serve him. He has equipped us with his word, filled us with his Spirit, and promised to be with us to the end of the age. “So we can go, we can serve the purposes of God in the lives of those around us, and we can do it with joy.”

► 1:45:01

He prayed for whatever each person lacked – “more thorough obedience, a deeper repentance, perhaps a more lavish adoration” – and that we would be people of the book and of the Spirit, “with a deep hunger and desire to embrace your call and to find the sweetness that is ours in obedience.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Matthew 28:18–20](#)
- [Ezekiel 1](#)
- [Ezekiel 2:1–2](#)
- [Ezekiel 2:3–5](#)
- [Ezekiel 2:8–3:3](#)
- [Ezekiel 3:12–15](#)
- [Ezekiel 3:16–21](#)
- [Ezekiel 3:22–27](#)
- [Romans 3:26](#)
- [Revelation 19:10](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Geno said every follower of Jesus is called and commissioned. How do you hear that – as a weight, an honor, or something you have never quite believed applied to you?
2. God raised Ezekiel to his feet with his humanity intact. What gifts or parts of your personality have you assumed God would rather erase than use?
3. When has a hard word from Scripture or from a friend turned out to be God's mercy to you?
4. Ezekiel sat in bitterness for seven days before he was ready. What call from God are you sitting with right now, and what would it take to say yes?
5. Of "people of the book" and "people of the Spirit," which is thinner in you, and what is one practice that would strengthen it this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Geno Hildebrandt serves as a pastor at Hope Chapel and was preaching through the book of Ezekiel in this season. He hosts a Saturday-night dinner church on Zoom that was reading about Celtic spirituality, describes himself as charismatic in his experience of the Holy Spirit, and told the congregation that he once walked away for several years from something God had called him to do.

Watch the full message:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsZ_7ucD-KU&t=3797s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.