

He said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you.”²The Spirit entered into me as he spoke to me and brought me up to my feet. Then I heard him speaking to me.

³He said to me, “Son of man, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to disloyal nations, who have been disloyal to me. They and their fathers have rebelled against me to this very day. ⁴These children of mine are brazen-faced and hard-hearted. I am sending you to them, and you are to tell them that this is what the LORD God says. ⁵Then, whether they listen or do not listen—for they are a rebellious house—then they will know that a prophet has been among them. ⁶But you, son of man, do not be afraid of them, and do not be afraid of their words. Even though briars and thorns surround you and you are living with scorpions, do not be afraid of their words, and do not be intimidated by the look on their faces, for they are a rebellious house. ⁷You are to speak my words to them whether they listen or they do not, for they are rebellious.

The prophet Ezekiel along with so many others from the southern kingdom of Israel, called Judah, had been captured by Babylon and dragged away from their homeland. Now it was Ezekiel’s job to prophesy to a group that had turned their backs on God. Punishment was certainly theirs because of their rebellion. God does not hold back on this fact in the section we have in front of us today. He calls them disloyal, brazen-faced, hard-hearted, rebellious, and scorpions. As you can see, God’s opinion of his people was at a low point.

But God would not leave them to rot. In fact, he sends the prophet Ezekiel to deliver the bad news to the rebellious people with the intention that these people will repent. As God speaks to Ezekiel here, it seems like he’s giving him three commands. Each one starts with the phrase “son of man.” As we go over these three commands, we cannot forget what God is trying to accomplish. Why would he come to Ezekiel and tell him to go and speak to a people that God has all these bad names for? Because God cares for the lost, even those who have rebelled against him. As we go over these sections, I want to look at them from two perspectives.

Sometimes we are the rebellious people that need to hear God’s voice through his messengers. And sometimes we are the messengers God calls who is hesitant to speak his truth to the lost in our lives.

God says to Ezekiel, “Son of man, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you.” Ezekiel then tells us, “The Spirit entered into me as he spoke to me and brought me up to my feet. Then I heard him speaking to me.” We’re not told that Ezekiel is lazy. We don’t hear that he pushes back against God. But God still has to tell Ezekiel to stand on his feet and listen. We hear something special about what’s going on here. The Holy Spirit enters into Ezekiel and lifts him to his feet. Why can’t Ezekiel do it himself? Why does it sound like Ezekiel isn’t really doing anything here? It’s because Ezekiel is only a “son of man.” He’s sinful. He’s frail. He’s mortal. Anything Ezekiel will accomplish will come from the hand of God. Therefore, there is no place for Ezekiel to become proud or conceited.

Our call comes from God too. But unlike Ezekiel, our call from God is not direct. He does not come to us in visions while we’re sitting by the canal to tell us to preach to the lost. But he does call us through his word, not to speak some prophecy he gives us directly, but to share this word of truth. The Holy Spirit is in us too. But we want to be careful that we don’t ascribe all of our actions and all of our emotions to the Holy Spirit. There is still that sinful nature struggling in all of us. We might think our emotions are right. We might think the way we think and talk and act are Spirit-wrought. But we have to be careful, because Satan will twist this teaching for his own purposes. He will use the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in our hearts to convince us that everything that goes on in our hearts is the work of the Holy Spirit. All of this does not silence the point that the

Holy Spirit is alive in us. The good desires in us to serve God's will, the selfless things we do in thanks to God, these are all the work of the Holy Spirit. As God calls us to share his word, we recognize that we are just sons of man, that everything good that lives in us is not from ourselves, but from the Lord.

God gives Ezekiel the Holy Spirit and then begins to instruct him on his work: "Son of man, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to disloyal nations, who have been disloyal to me. They and their fathers have rebelled against me to this very day. These children of mine are brazen-faced and hard-hearted. I am sending you to them, and you are to tell them that this is what the LORD God says. Then, whether they listen or do not listen—for they are a rebellious house—then they will know that a prophet has been among them." Look at how God describes these people. They're disloyal. They're rebellious, and that rebellion has carried over from generations past. Their hearts are hard against the Lord. But what's Ezekiel's task? He's supposed to go and report what the Lord says. These people have given up on God, but God has not given up on them.

Do we not see the same disloyalty today? There are plenty of people who want to label themselves Christians. They have a Bible at home. They just don't know where they left it. They have a church that they belong to. They just haven't been there in quite some time and could not give the name of their current pastor. But they wear a cross necklace, and they know the name Jesus. They just don't want Jesus to be their Savior from sin because that would require them to acknowledge their sinfulness and have a change of heart toward those sins that they are cuddled up so closely with. It may not look all that rebellious, but these are the kinds of people Ezekiel is to minister to.

But they're not the only rebels in God's sight. You and I can't look at these names God calls his people here and not think they also apply to us sometimes. Are we not disloyal to God's will for us in our lives? Do our hearts not become hard when we knowingly and intentionally give in to temptation? Yes, we are not unbelievers like the people Ezekiel is speaking to here, but there are certainly times in life when God uses his servants to call us back in repentance. But isn't that the point? God uses a feeble son of man like Ezekiel to bring his message to a people who desperately needed to hear it. The same happens for us, whether it is a sibling, friend, parent, child, or pastor. God provides us with people in our lives that are willing to comfort us with the gospel when we are in despair but are also willing to deliver the hammer of the law when we are proud in our rebellion against God.

Let's put ourselves in Ezekiel's position for a second though, because we are also called to go to the disloyal nations and speak the truth to those who don't want to hear it. But do we always have a "Here am I. Send me" kind of attitude? Or do we hesitate? Do we say, "Send someone else"? Why would God use you? Why would he use Ezekiel, the guy God won't let forget that he is a son of man? God uses the weakness of our humanity to show the power of his word. Ezekiel, you, and I go out, not as negotiators for God who have to make a convincing case on his behalf, but simply as messengers, as delivery drivers of law and gospel.

God gives Ezekiel one last piece of instruction as he goes to share God's word: "But you, son of man, do not be afraid of them, and do not be afraid of their words. Even though briars and thorns surround you and you are living with scorpions, do not be afraid of their words, and do not be intimidated by the look on their faces, for they are a rebellious house. You are to speak my words to them whether they listen or they do not, for they are rebellious."

Ezekiel is to go and speak God's word to his people, but he is not to be afraid of how they will respond. Would everyone hear his words, calling them out for their rebellion, with acceptance and repentance? Of course not. This is not how people respond when they are accused of wrongdoing. They deflect the blame to someone else. They make excuses. They move the goalposts and change God's standards. While some would heed

Ezekiel's message and turn back to God, most would not. They would remain stubborn in their sin and unbelief. Some would even threaten violence and carry it out.

It's easier said than done, but we must remain humble when people come to us and call us out for our sin. We must not try to push the blame onto others. We must not tell them that we don't have to listen. We do have to listen, not because they necessarily have authority over us, but because God's word does. And if the goal is to get us to the calm seas of the gospel, if the aim is to show us our Savior from sin, it is good that those who care about us are willing to drag us through the storms of the law to get us there.

Similarly, when it's time for us to deliver the truth about sin, we should not back away. We should not worry about what our hearers will think of us. We should care that they heard God's word, and God promises to work through that word to bring about change in many hearts.

So, should you give up trying to talk to that friend who seems uninterested to hear about Jesus? Should you be silent about God's word at family events when you know saying something might upend the apple cart? No, because you care about the souls of your family and friends. And while you're not going to try and insert religion into every conversation you have, when the opportunity strikes to talk about your hope, don't be afraid of what's said in response.

So, get up to speak, dear son of man! You have been filled with the Holy Spirit. You have his word and know that word's truth. But God has called you to share that word. Go, call people to repentance like John the Baptist and offer them the sweet drink of the gospel when they begin to thirst for it. Do it no matter how you think people might respond. Why? Because this is what God did for you. He rescued you from sin and rebellion and unbelief. He put and puts people in your life to show you your sin and show you the Savior that died for each and every one of your sins. Go be that for others, that God's voice may be heard by many more. Amen.